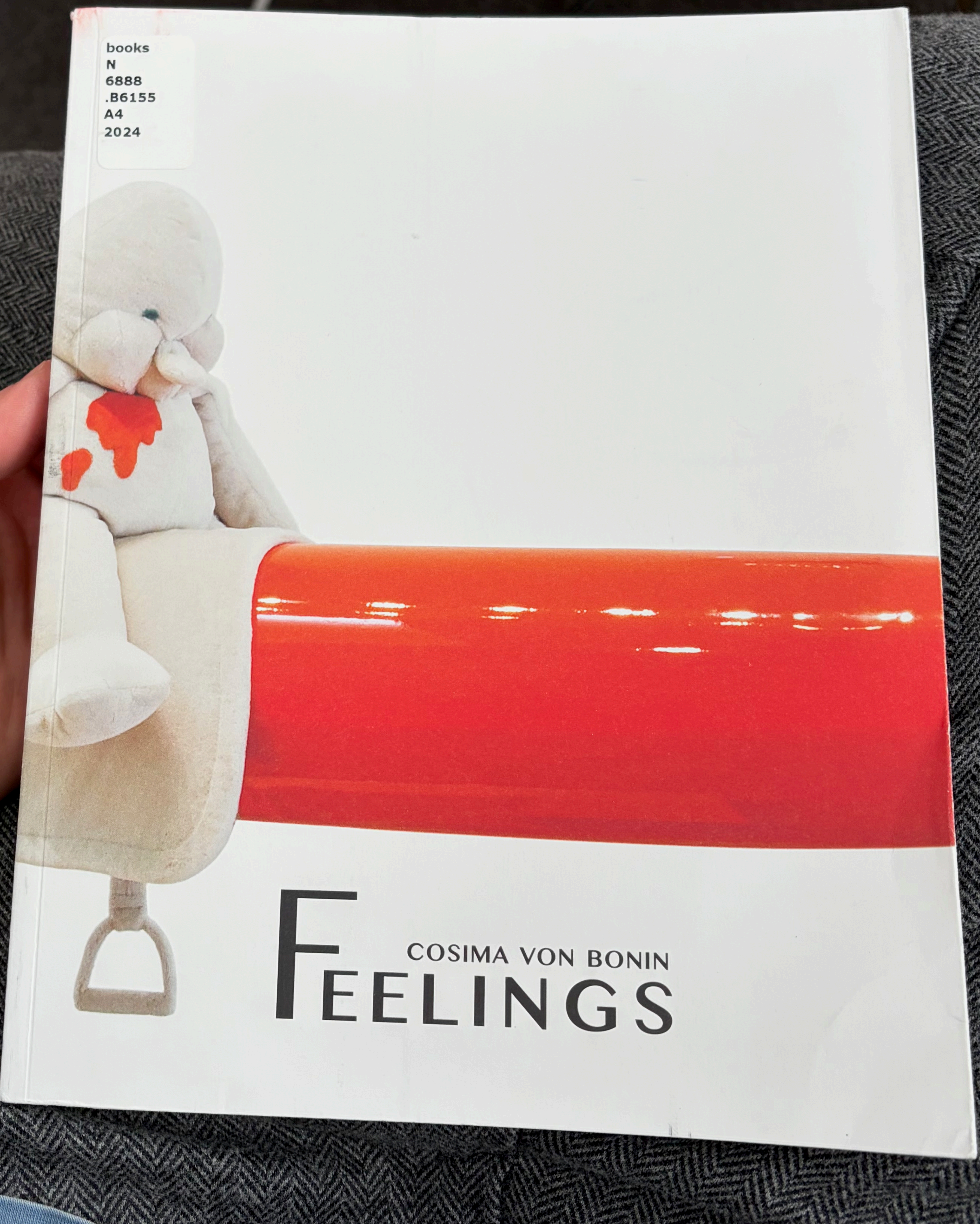


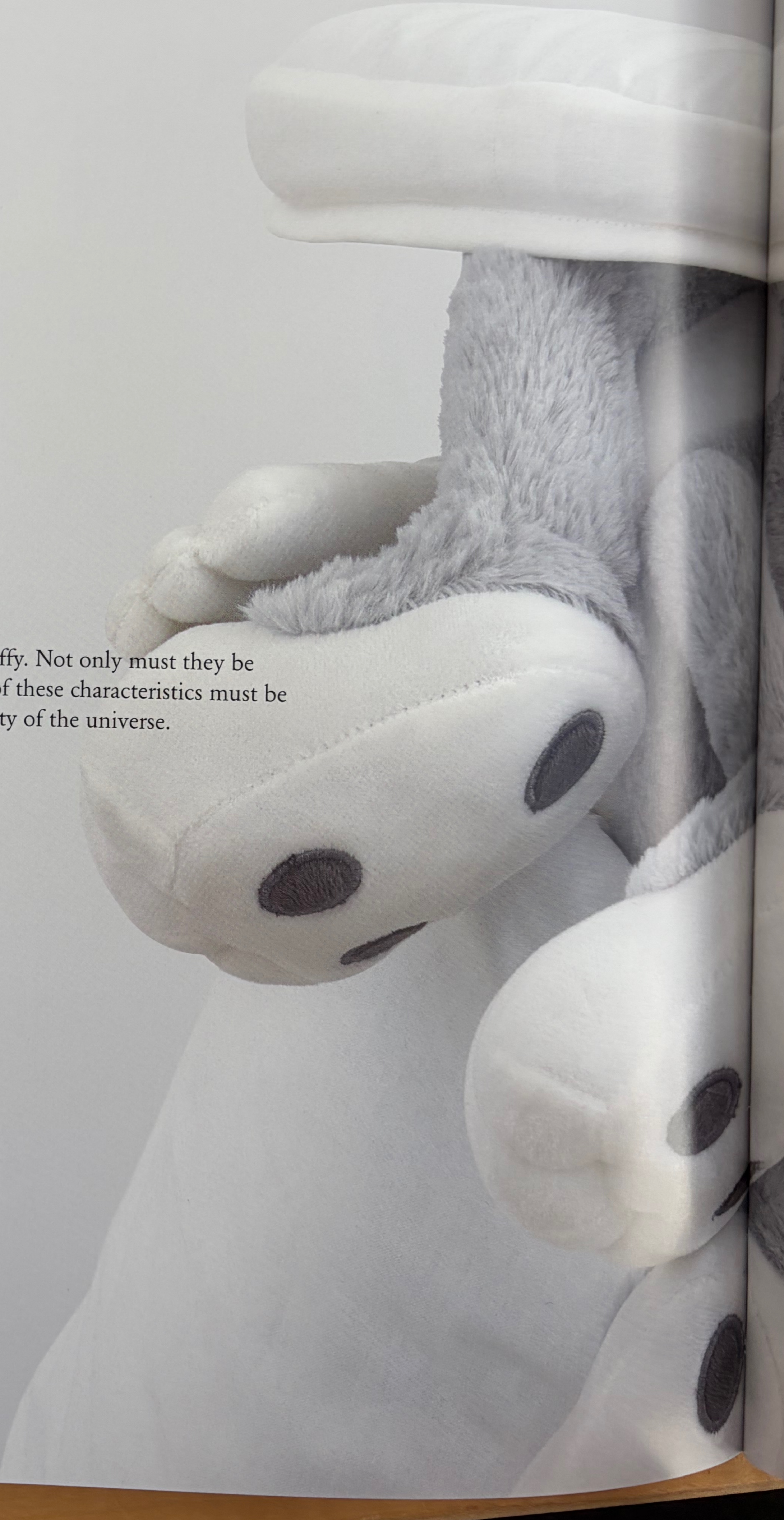
books
N
6888
.B6155
A4
2024

COSIMA VON BONIN

FEELINGS

The Daffy Formula

To be a Daffy, a character must first and foremost be like Daffy. Not only must they be congenitally selfish, devious, grandiose, and craven, but all of these characteristics must be magnified to grotesque proportions due to the pointed cruelty of the universe.



FOREWORD
Sebastian Baden
176

FEELINGS
Katharina Dohm
181

THE JOY OF A TOY
Diedrich Diederichsen
187

DEMON CLEARING SERVICE
Clara Drechsler
197

List of Exhibited Works
205

FRIENDS OF THE SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT E. V.

The Schirn Friends are delighted to be able to support the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt as the main supporter in the realization of the solo exhibition *Cosima von Bonin: feelings*.

The artist's works are impressive, expansive installations and sculptures in which contradictions such as seriousness and humor are interwoven. Cosima von Bonin has been exploring transformations of the quotidian for many years, making use of numerous references from pop culture, film, fashion, music, and art.

In her installations, the artist combines various protagonists into a society of social relations, such as tired soft toys or comic figures, soft fences or shimmering rockets. In this way, she invites viewers to critically reflect on various facets of society.

We are delighted to be a part of the project, and to be able to make this contemporary artist accessible to the Frankfurt public and to an international audience.

Antje Conzelmann
Chair
Friends of the
Schirn Kunsthalle
Frankfurt e. V.

ihre Werke hervorgehen. „Ich bin viele“ oder auch „Wir sind viele“, sagt sie dabei über sich und die Mitwirkenden an ihrer Kunst. Im Hintergrund wirkt das Soziotop der Kölner Kunst- und Musikszene. Ihre Referenzen benennt sie häufig ganz direkt: Isa Genzken, Mike Kelley, Cady Noland oder auch Britney Spears, um nur einige zu nennen. Die Aneignung, Zuspitzung und das pointierte Spiel mit Wort und Bild machen die Kunst von Cosima von Bonin zu einem

FOREWORD

Under the title *Cosima von Bonin: feelings*, the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt is showing a solo institutional exhibition by Cosima von Bonin in Germany for the first time in twelve years, with the artist presenting murals, sculptures, performances, and installations.

In Cosima von Bonin's artistic practice, references to art history, popular culture, and music are blended with an approach that integrates craft and design practices. In this way, she produces works that are evocative of set design, illustrations, or model-making prototypes. In her exhibitions, she creates expansive works or installations. The core of Cosima von Bonin's work relates to the performativity of things: her objects and sculptures become events in the exhibition space.

Her exhibitions are inhabited by soft toy assemblages, fabric collages on stretcher frames, rocket models with painted surfaces, crochet-covered cement mixers, or characters from comics and cartoons. Their initially cute appearance reveals a series of contradictions when viewed more closely: cuteness and horror, softness and stiffness, humor and seriousness coalesce in one and the same figure. A key protagonist found in her work is Daffy Duck. The comic duck is known as an agent provocateur and anarchist, a lisping whistleblower with a slobbering pronunciation whose actions usually end up backfiring. Daffy Duck portrays comic failure. He experiences disastrous moments in the comic strip and yet he always manages to survive the accidents. The character accompanies the audience through *feelings* as a leitmotif; Cosima von Bonin reduces the cartoon to individual images. A fabric collage depicts the duck fighting with the credits, the frame and the illusion of representation. With the same irony that is dominant in the comic world of Daffy Duck, the artist incorporates terms and sentences into her fabric collages.

Cosima von Bonin collaborates with musicians and artist friends, whose work she brings into her solo and group exhibitions. She leaves her personal artistic genius to one side, as she speaks openly about the collaborations from which her works emerge. “I am many” or “we are many” is how she refers to herself and the contributors to her art. The sociotope of Cologne's art and music scene is at work in the background. She frequently name-checks her references: Isa Genzken, Mike Kelley,

FOREWORD

Under the title *Cosima von Bonin: feelings*, the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt is showing a solo institutional exhibition by Cosima von Bonin in Germany for the first time in twelve years, with the artist presenting murals, sculptures, performances, and installations.

In Cosima von Bonin's artistic practice, references to art history, popular culture, and music are blended with an approach that integrates craft and design practices. In this way, she produces works that are evocative of set design, illustrations, or model-making prototypes. In her exhibitions, she creates expansive works or installations. The core of Cosima von Bonin's work relates to the performativity of things: her objects and sculptures become events in the exhibition space.

Her exhibitions are inhabited by soft toy assemblages, fabric collages on stretcher frames, rocket models with painted surfaces, crochet-covered cement mixers, or characters from comics and cartoons. Their initially cute appearance reveals a series of contradictions when viewed more closely: cuteness and horror, softness and stiffness, humor and seriousness coalesce in one and the same figure. A key protagonist found in her work is Daffy Duck. The comic duck is known as an agent provocateur and anarchist, a lisping whistleblower with a slobbering pronunciation whose actions usually end up backfiring. Daffy Duck portrays comic failure. He experiences disastrous moments in the comic strip and yet he always manages to survive the accidents. The character accompanies the audience through *feelings* as a leitmotif; Cosima von Bonin reduces the cartoon to individual images. A fabric collage depicts the duck fighting with the credits, the frame and the illusion of representation. With the same irony that is dominant in the comic world of Daffy Duck, the artist incorporates terms and sentences into her fabric collages.

Cosima von Bonin collaborates with musicians and artist friends, whose work she brings into her solo and group exhibitions. She leaves her personal artistic genius to one side, as she speaks openly about the collaborations from which her works emerge. "I am many" or "we are many" is how she refers to herself and the contributors to her art. The sociotope of Cologne's art and music scene is at work in the background. She frequently name-checks her references: Isa Genzken, Mike Kelley, Cady Noland, and Britney Spears, to mention but a few. The appropriation, intensification, and pointed play with words and images make Cosima von Bonin's art a parcours of dark humor. References to memories and experiences, such as those from childhood, become emotions—*feelings*.

My great appreciation is extended, above all, to Cosima von Bonin for her inspiring and close collaboration in developing the exhibition for the Schirn. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to Simone Junker for her dedicated cooperation in all respects, from initial preparations through to the opening of the exhibition, to Julia Koep and Sarah Ferreira dos Santos e Sousa from the CvB studio Cologne, and to Cosima von Bonin's archivist Thomas Judin. I would also like to thank Friedrich Petzel and Andrea Teschke of the Petzel gallery, New York. Additional thanks go to Galerie Neu, Berlin, in particular Ludovica Parenti and Alexander Neu, as well as to Fernando Mesta and Gabriela Magaña of House of Gaga, Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Los Angeles for their valuable, continued support of our project and for the provision and mediation of numerous important loans. I would also like to thank the many private lenders and museums who have made their works available for the exhibition. The generous lenders include, among others, the Eleanor and Bobby Cayre Collection, New York, the Gabriela Cámara Collection, the Grässlin Collection, St. Georgen, Magasin III Museum for Contemporary Art, Stockholm, the Meyring Collection, the Perić Collection, the Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main, and the Stiftung Der bewohnte Garten, Pulheim, as well as numerous private collections in Europe and North America, including Mexico.

The ongoing support of our supporters and partners is of great significance for the realization of our extensive projects. Particular gratitude is extended to the Friends of the Schirn Kunsthalle e. V. with its more than 2,000 members. As a generous supporter, it consistently makes contemporary exhibitions possible that are typical of our museum's program. A special word of thanks goes to Antje Conzelmann as the chair of the association and to the entire board with Jan Bauer and Sylvia von Metzler, as well as the executive managers Tamara von Clary and Tereza Sipkova. For their constant support of our work at the Schirn, I would like to specifically thank the City of

Frankfurt am Main. As representatives of all decision-makers, further gratitude is extended to Mayor Mike Josef and to Ina Hartwig, head of the cultural department.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Katharina Dohm, who, as curator, conceived and developed the exhibition for Frankfurt together with Cosima von Bonin and realized it impressively for our spaces. The intensive joint work on the project was characterized by trust, inspiration, and joy. Marie Oucherif and Cornelia Eisendle, her curatorial assistants, supported her with the utmost commitment; I also thank them most sincerely for their great contribution to the preparation and realization of the exhibition.

My gratitude is warmly extended to Diedrich Diederichsen, Katharina Dohm, and Clara Drechsler for their outstandingly creative and enriching contributions to the catalogue. For the exceptional design of this publication, which was developed in close collaboration with the artist, I would like to thank Yvonne Quirmbach. The translations of the texts are thanks to James Gussen, Susie Hondl, and Mark Schreiber. I wish to thank Dawn Michelle d'Atri and Pia Oddo for their meticulous proofreading.

My gratitude goes to the publishing house Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther und Franz König, in particular to Nicole Rankers, for the excellent cooperation. I would like to thank the fabulous drag queens Mary Messhausen and proddy produzentin (Anthony Hill and Markus Ziegler) for their performances during the opening and the artist talk.

Without the dedicated team at the Schirn, this exhibition and accompanying publication would not have been possible. I would like to express my sincere thanks to all staff members, especially the deputy director and head of exhibitions, Esther Schlicht. I thank Elke Walter, Caroline Käding, and Fanny Bengsch for the coordination of the loans and of the installation and deinstallation of the exhibition, and Christian Teltz and Oliver Taschke for the technical coordination and support. Furthermore, I wish to show my appreciation to Andreas Gundermann and the entire installation team and the conservators Stefanie Gundermann and Susanne Silbernagel. Likewise, I thank Luise Leyer in her capacity as the curatorial consultant to the management. In addition, Luise Bachmann, Heike Stumpf, Angelika Schäfer, and Doroteya Shmileva for the marketing and design of the campaign, and Johanna Pulz, Julia Bastian, Maya Röttger, and Thea Stroh for the press relations. My appreciation goes to Natalie Storelli for the coordination and supervision of this publication and to Julia Schaake as editor of the Schirn Mag. I also wish to thank Laura Heeg together with Simone Boscheinen, Lisa Reinhard, Olga Schätz, Sarah Schweizer, and Samanea Karrfalt for the accompanying educational program, and Vivien Shahzad and Constanze Götz for the development and realization of the events. My gratitude goes to Hannah Doll and Corinna Fröhling for their coordination work and for their support of our partners. Likewise, I thank Heike Berndt, Boris Deckelmann, Tanja Mayer, and Kristian Strauß in the administration of the Schirn and Samira Koch and Katharina Schuchmann for their assistance in numerous areas. I would like to conclude by thanking Stefan Schell, Rosaria La Tona and the janitorial team, Christiane Kalla and Madinyam Islamova at the reception, and all other Schirn personnel who were involved in the realization of this extensive project.

Sebastian Baden
Director
Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt

She has the same approach as Isa Genzken, one of her great idols, and does not like to talk about her art or explain it. Before I can respond, she quotes Genzken to explain why one must always try to empathize with the viewer: “Otherwise one is a cold person and not an artist.”[1]

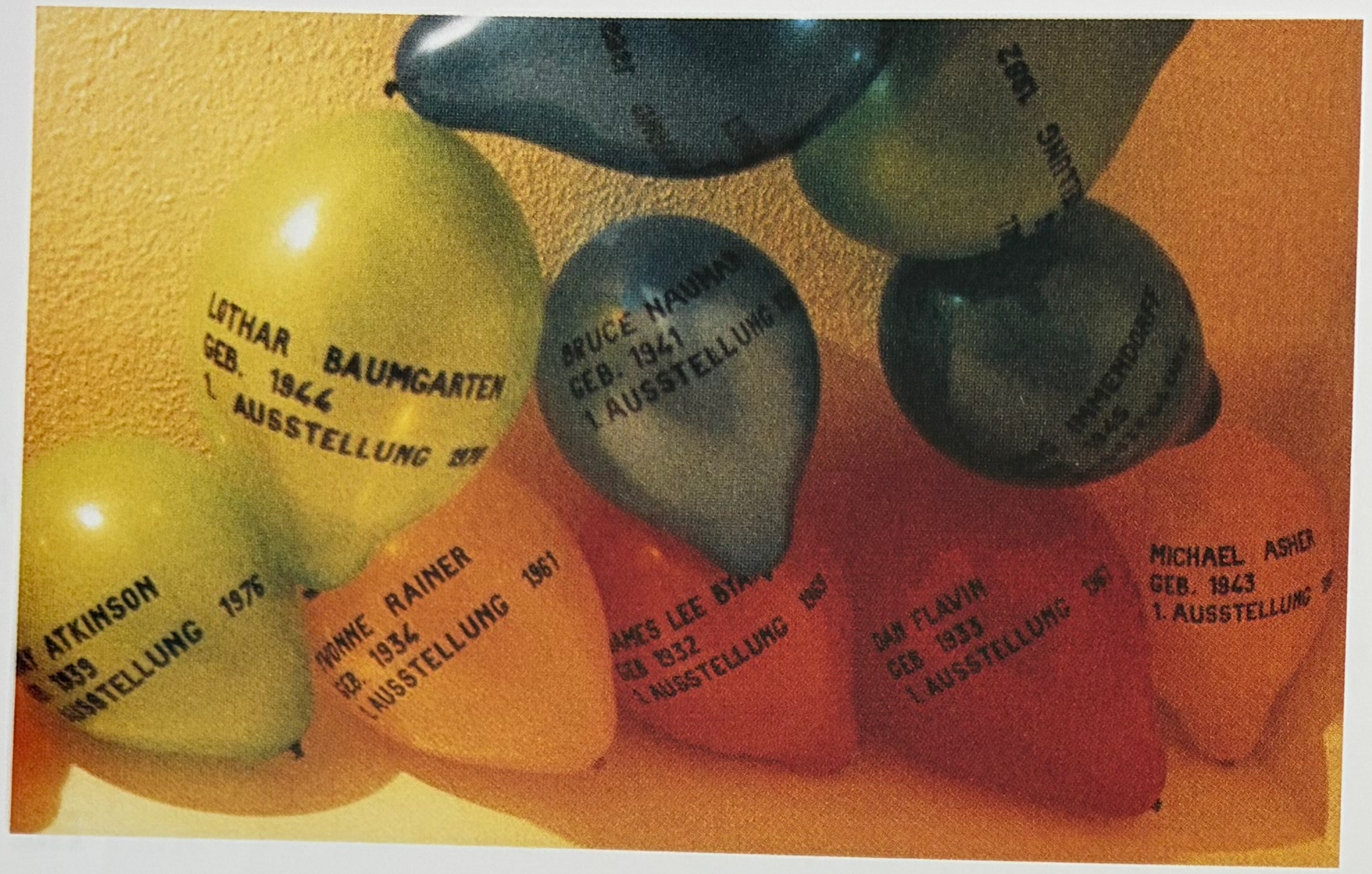
Cosima von Bonin is quite open about her role models. Besides Isa Genzken, they include figures from the German art scene such as Martin Kippenberger, Blinky Palermo, and Sigmar Polke, as well as American icons such as Jack Smith, Cady Noland, and her “goddess” Mike Kelley.[2] She also mentions Rihanna, Britney Spears, and Missy Elliott. She could no doubt quickly extend this list of superstars to many other spheres like film, TV series, literature, or fashion. It is this nomenclature, or hall of fame, that forms the sustenance of her work, in other words, the basis. It also provides the rules of the game, so long as the names can be attributed. Her diversity in terms of references is an oft-cited trademark of the artist, but one for which she has also been criticized. It has been said that only insiders and friends are even able to decode them.[3] Is a work of art a crossword puzzle, waiting to be solved? Even if all the names were known and the references recognized, what significance would that have? Am I then enlightened as a viewer? No, one remains behind a fence. The exhibition title *feelings* does not exactly help, either. Is it about feelings and art, or perhaps feelings in the exhibition? It would be nothing short of sacrilege to be emotionally engaged with art. The titles of the exhibitions and works do not serve as instructions. They captivate with their wordplay. They are able to provide commentary and can also mislead. The art either touches one’s heart or it leaves one cold. Either way, it is all the same to Cosima von Bonin. Many ideas and methods could be employed for an understanding, and perhaps this requires translation into the respective language, time, and discursive

---

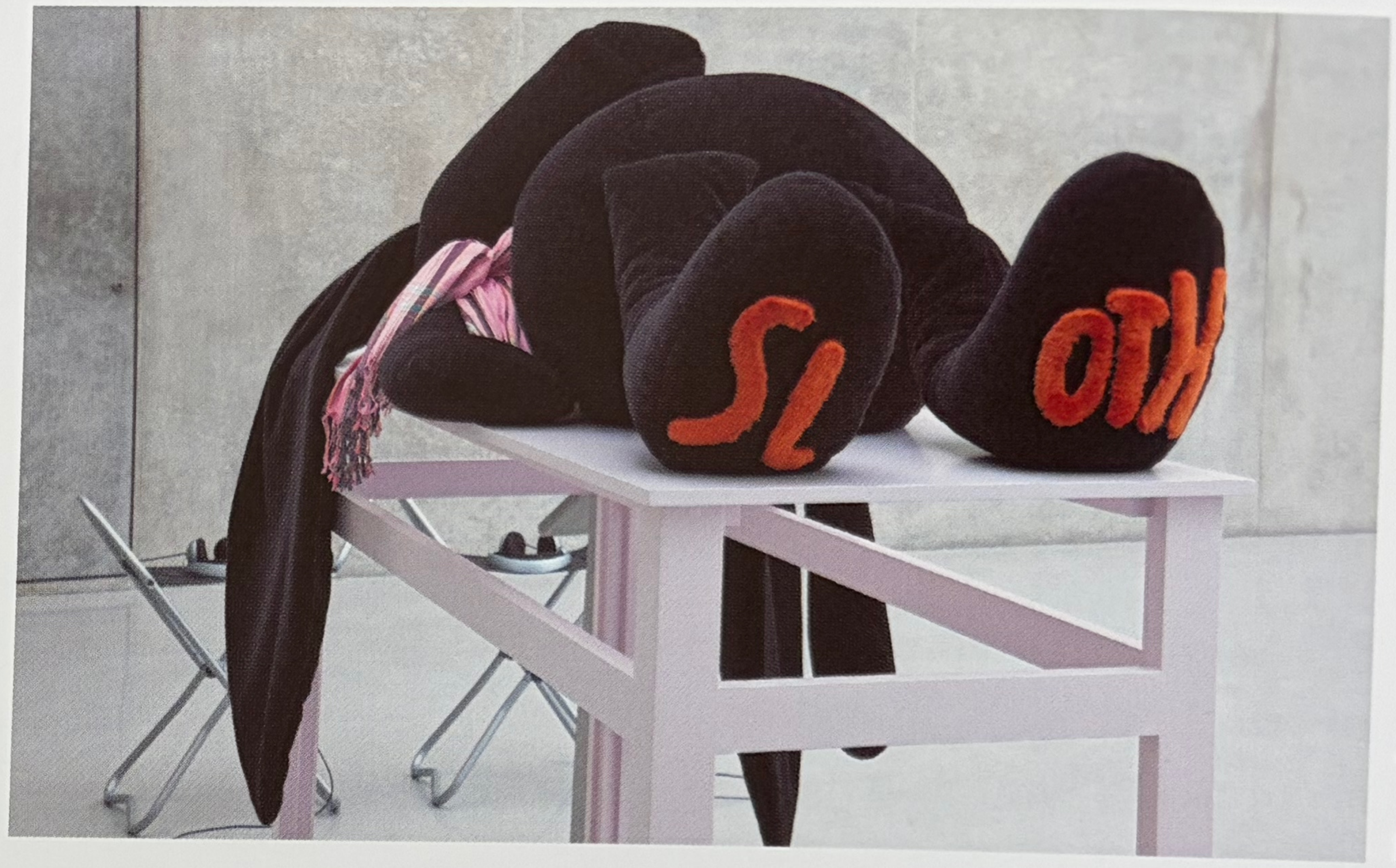
[1] Isa Genzken, *Warum ich keine Interviews gebe*, quoted in conversation with Kai Althoff, 2003, digital film, color, sound, 10:08 min., accessed with password (via Galerie Buchholz, www.galeriebuchholz.de) on December 11, 2023, https://vimeo.com/148479796.

[2] The title of a 2023 installation by Cosima von Bonin is *Mike Kelley is my Goddess*.

[3] See Nancy Princenthal, “Cosima von Bonin,” *Art in America*, May 30, 2011, https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/aia-reviews/cosima-von-bonin-2-60940 (all URLs accessed in January 2024).



Münzstraße 10, 1990



Kunsthaus Bregenz, 2010

contexts. As Susan Sontag notes in her 1964 essay "Against Interpretation": "The task of interpretation is virtually one of translation." She recommends the following: "What is important now is to recover our senses. We must learn to *see* more, to *hear* more, to *feel* more."[4]

An understanding often begins with the artist's biography, and so we read that Cosima von Bonin (CvB) was born in Mombasa, Kenya, in 1962 and moved with her family to Salzburg in Austria as a child. Since 1986 she has lived and worked in Cologne, where she received her education in the art and music scene of the time and at the Walther König bookshop. Through Martin Kippenberger, she met Michael Krebber, whom she later married. In 1988, she studied for just one year at the HFBK University of Fine Arts Hamburg under Werner Büttner.[5] In her very first exhibition in Hamburg at the Münzstraße 10 exhibition space, together with Josef Strau, she literally inscribed herself in art history by writing on balloons the name and year of birth of famous protagonists of Conceptual Art, along with the date of their first respective exhibition. So it was that she also gained entry into a male-dominated art world.

"We are many" is how she refers to her practice. She breaks with traditional notions of the artist-genius who works alone to instead work together with an ensemble of people making art happen. As an artist, curator, and master of ceremonies, Cosima von Bonin collaborates with artist friends, technicians, carpenters, and with musicians such as Moritz von Oswald or Dirk von Lowtzow. She has her textile canvases made by haute couture tailors. Her exhibitions are filled with canvases that she calls *Lappen* (rags), sculptures made from a wide variety of materials, large soft toys, film, photography, music, and, lastly, displays and pedestals. The various elements enter into an open dialogue and relationship with one another.

Kunsthaus Bregenz, 201

The exhibition *The Fatigue Empire* (2010 at Kunsthaus Bregenz, Austria), features numerous exhausted soft toys. A rabbit lies on its back on a bench, and lettering on the soles of its feet identify it as a lazybones ("SLOTH"). The states of exhaustion, tiredness, and inactivity are celebrated here. Waste of time and the idleness of a dawdler also reflect a rejection of, but not only, capitalist concepts of work and social rules. Carpe diem—why exactly?

The soft fences, covered here in black velvet (*Fence [Corner Version], [Long Version], [Short Version]*, 2020, pp. 56–60), which CvB has regularly exhibited in various versions since 2000, never appear to be intended to demarcate, contain, or exclude anything. Rather, they define the void, provide a frame, and create a stage and space. The materiality of their surfaces changes the perception of a fence, a high-gloss painted rocket, or a crocheted cement mixer. What is hard becomes soft. What is small becomes gigantic. And what is sweet becomes bitter.

The plush animal figures, such as the pigs hanging as though they were drying on a washing line in *Marathon, Que Le Fuck Version* (2023, pp. 142–46) or others lying flat on a mirrored stage in *Open Your Shirt Please 6* (2019, pp. 16–17), resemble a state of lethargy. The soft toys may seem cute at first glance, evoking feelings and memories of childhood, thus making them initially accessible. Yet on closer inspection, the vomit on the chest of the oversized chick (p. 134) and the fetish objects, such as the handcuffs next to the pigs, are quite disturbing.

Outlines of Daffy Duck and Bambi appear on the "rags," and we automatically cry out "Oh, how cute!" at the sight of the fawn's head, which is so much in keeping with the childlike theme. In this exhibition, the sculpture *Cute (Pink Version)* (2018, p. 141) refers to this in less cloying terms. *Love Bombing* and *Gaslighting*,

---

4: Susan Sontag, "Against Interpretation," in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1967), pp. 3–14, esp. pp. 5 and 14.

5: For the students' annual exhibition, she presented a book several centimeters thick that contained transcriptions of tape recordings from the seminars. In 2002, Cosima von Bonin returned to the HFBK University of Fine Arts Hamburg as a visiting professor.

both created in 2023 (pp. 86, 87), are the titles of the Bambi imagery, and each refers to a perfidious and dangerous manipulation technique used in love relationships. Entering these terms into Google, one finds, among other things, a link to the information page of a large German health insurance company, which warns of the dangers of these psychological manipulation strategies.[6] Bambi manipulates, feigns love, fabricates supposed facts, and suffocates us. Cute figures trigger certain emotions and behaviors, alluding to a consumer and entertainment world that is often manipulative. Even if her installations appear colorful and amusing at first sight, CvB's works move between opposites such as humor and seriousness, love and hate, fantasy and reality, superficiality and profundity.

Quotes from the world of comics are already present in the early fabric images (from the first decade of the twenty-first century) as outlines or apparent fragments, such as the famous white "gloved hand" of Mickey Mouse. The textile pictures are mostly sewn together from various high-quality fabrics with different patterns and mounted on stretcher frames with contours. Some hang on the wall, but often they are embedded in pedestals like roadside billboards. Daffy Duck takes center stage in the current *Lappen* works *Kalt Modern Teuer*, *Emporkömmling*, and *Social Climber* (pp. 161, 165, 167), all created in 2023, as well as in the series *Open Your Shirt Please 1–9* (pp. 1–26) from 2019. On *Social Climber*, the statement "Next week we've got to get organized" can be read on a kind of label at the bottom edge of the picture. Next week, mañana—sticking to that idea wouldn't amount to a social climber. In *Shirt / Fluff / Same Day* (2007, pp. 74–75), the Margiela label logo is in the center of the picture on a black-and-blue checkered background. Black square, black jumper, curator, collector. Those four dashes were a clear sign back then that one belonged and earned enough money. (I bought my first Margiela jumper at Century 21 NYC after the brand had already been bought up by Diesel. Of course, I didn't know that, and so I was too late, out, and embarrassed.) In her visual worlds, CvB translates strategies of capitalism, marketing, the consumer world, desire, and the great basic need to be a part of all of that.

In the series *Open Your Shirt Please 1–9*, Daffy Duck struggles in vain against the mighty black that threatens to push him out of the picture. It is a fight for his own existence with an uncertain outcome. In *Open Your Shirt Please 8*, the black has won. In *Open Your Shirt Please 9*, however, the determined Daffy pushes the lettering announcing the end of the film out of the frame with great effort and panic. Undeterred, Daffy appears repeatedly on the screen, and thus the solo exhibition *Church of Daffy* (2023) at the Petzel gallery in New York relates to resurrection and triumph. Here, Daffy appears like a prophet with his arms raised and a loincloth made of exquisite pieces of fabric knotted around his hips, while numerous Bugs Bunnys are trapped upside down in the garbage can (pp. 156–57). Daffy, the anti-hero, the lisping pain in the neck, the belligerent anarchist, who is also megalomaniac and untiring to boot. Failure is inevitable: everything he touches eventually turns out wrong. Will he not fall off his pedestal anyway? The press release for the Petzel exhibition explains what it means to be a "daffy": "Not only must they be congenitally selfish, devious, grandiose, and craven, but all of these characteristics must be magnified to grotesque proportions due to the pointed cruelty of the universe."[7] This disproportionate characterization of a daffy ensures that one overcomes failure, persists, rises up, and is resurrected. Are we not all a bit "daffy"? Or would we at least like to be like Daffy Duck? The uncertainty that the exhibition title *feelings* already hints at, being both seductive and irritating, is indeed continued in the performance by the drag queens Mary Messhausen and proddy produzentin. They have been performing at the openings of CvB's exhibitions for approximately twenty years, getting dangerously close to the works in the most delightful way.[8] They allow an entirely different approach and experience to emerge in the exhibition, which directly engages with the art and the visitors. What is at play here? Can it, and will it, be about strong feelings? Enough feelings! An artist was at work here, not an ice-cold person.

6: See "Warum Love Bombing so gefährlich ist," *AOK Gesundheitsmagazin*, July 31, 2023, https://www.aok.de/pk/magazin/familie/liebe-sexualitaet/love-bombing-bedeutung-anzeichen-und-praevention/. See also Wikipedia, s.v. "Gaslighting," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaslighting.

7: "The Daffy Formula: To be a Daffy, a character must first and foremost be like Daffy. Not only must they be congenitally selfish, devious, grandiose, and craven, but all of these characteristics must be magnified to grotesque proportions due to the pointed cruelty of the universe." English quotations cited from https://www.petzel.com/exhibitions/cosima-von-bonin7.

8: They sometimes also perform together with Doc Nancy.

THE JOY OF A TOY

DIEDRICH DIEDERICHSEN

They can be found at most of the exhibitions to which Cosima von Bonin has contributed in recent decades. A kind of object that can be broken down across various parameters. First on the list would be *softness of surface*, on a scale ranging from extremely supple, fluffy, and cuddly to soft like a carpet; second, *softness of skeleton*, which varies between frail, bedridden, and invertebrate through leaning, hanging, and even strung up to standing; then the degree of performed *autonomy*, from completely passive, subordinate, and supine through seated and half-awake to ready for possible activity, as indicated by open eyes and slightly extroverted postures; then of course also *gender*, not necessarily on a linear scale but in mixtures of various proportions; and certainly also *mental fitness and intelligence*, from wise and depressive to cheerful and clueless. Finally, one might add the parameter of *reference*. Thus, entire comic strips or classic toys (by Steiff, for example) could be interpreted as pointing to highly specific cultural backgrounds. It remains an open question, however, what living creature is meant to be depicted. A really existing animal, an abstraction of such an animal (a teddy bear with the corresponding semantic fields Roosevelt and Adorno), or a wholly invented creature? And if the latter, does the animal before us represent the realization of such an invention or merely cite it?

I am speaking of the ubiquitous soft toys, but also of the objects that share with soft toys only some of the above-mentioned material properties or functions, yet in no way represent animals, such as the fluffy fences that are particularly numerous in CvB's early work. Of course, I also have in mind the works in which plush and soft toys merely participate as (implicit) spectators rather than standing front and center. They populate CvB's installations in the most disparate constellations: as objects to be looked at or even objects that look back (like many apes in many zoos), above all, however, as absorbed spectators of the installation within the latter itself. In this capacity, they gradually take over the function of other stand-ins that inhabited or were represented in the museum interiors that CvB has designed in recent decades and that often resemble stage sets or the scenery of total artworks: be they living performers, musicians, and dancers such as Red Krayola, David Grubbs, Dirk von Lowtzow, Moritz von Oswald, and the drag queens proddy produzentin and Mary Messhausen, or the dead and distant models she has invoked, including Poul Gernes, Jack Smith, and Joan Jett. It has frequently been pointed out that CvB is fond of designing, convening, and choreographing families, that she puts together genealogies, designs artificial and queer lines of descent, and in general sets up crowds or multitudes that are either communicating in order to set something in motion or pausing at moments of specific communicative situations and freezing as tableaux vivants or even tableaux of soft toys, whose aliveness will be a topic of interest for us here. You can look forward to a brief metaphysical excursion in the further course of our reflections! For now, we can observe that the plushness and softness, the sculptural/anti-sculptural qualities, of these soft toys—with respect to rigidity, surface character, and unambiguousness—are combined with the (uncanny) personal qualities that were previously (as well as simultaneously) embodied by real people, performers, and heroes. Objects and subjects now refuse to be distinguished: an ancient dream and an equally ancient nightmare. In no other scenario are dystopia and utopia so close together.

First, however, I would like to discuss a historical toy, very much in the spirit of genealogical research as a generator of fiction, a technique perfected by CvB in her search for and discovery of precursors, or in this case as an inspiration for and concretization of the character of toys in an artistic treatment from another field—that of pop music. The song I have in mind is "Joy of a Toy," which since the late 1960s has been repeatedly performed and further developed by the band Soft Machine and later by the song's composer, the guitarist and sometime bassist, Kevin Ayers, in his solo projects and together with other bands. Of primary interest to us is the Soft Machine version, which was first released on the band's debut album from 1968.[1] Of course, the band name itself is already a reference to the relationship between soft toys, sculptures, and installation art in general. While sculptures in the European tradition are generally conceived as upright, self-supporting, phallic constructs, installation art effectively operates with exoskeletons that make it possible for objects whose internal architecture can also be conceived as soft and invertebrate to hang, lean, recline, et cetera. In fact, *The Soft Machine* is the title of a famous novel by William S. Burroughs, the second and better-known version of which was published in 1966, the year the band was formed. However, the novel also contains the character of the Heavy Metal Kid and thus the earliest formulation of what would later become the generic term for a macho version of pop music that is not soft, corruptible, or flexible but rather unfeeling.

---

[1] Shortly afterward, Ayers released his solo album *Joy of a Toy*. On it, there is a piece of children's circus music called "Joy of a Toy Continued." In the fall of 2023, Soft Machine, which had long since ceased to contain any of its original members, released their new album, *Other Doors*, which featured a new and relatively faithful recording of "Joy of a Toy."

"Joy of a Toy" is the instrumental middle section of a three-part suite that begins with "Hope for Happiness," a relatively fast psychedelic rock song, and ends with its reprise. The song is by Robert Wyatt, the band's singer and drummer and still its best-known member, but his voice is distorted and multiplied by effects units. Then the group calms down, and a very soft-textured track begins in which an extremely reverberant guitar figure goes for a short, highly concentrated walk that is nonetheless marked by a mood of leisurely wandering against the backdrop of an elegant and unhurried bassline. Although it does not conform to the subdivisions of a pop song, there are various phases, characterized above all by the degree of movement in the principal part, but which do nothing to alter the tranquil, relaxed, and "fleecy" character of the overall sound. Although a road is traveled, the atmosphere does not change at all. Then the beat and Wyatt's vocals return, and the nervous, euphorically desperate hope for happiness is proclaimed again.

The entire suite exudes an intense and highly charged ambivalence. Wyatt makes it clear that hoping for happiness may not be the point, but, on the contrary, exchanging hope for happiness. Only the unhappy can hope, while the happy are hopeless. Wyatt's mother, Honor Wyatt, was a close friend of the British historian, mythologist, and novelist Robert von Ranke-Graves (*The White Goddess*; *I, Claudius*), who had lived in the town of Deià on Mallorca since the 1930s. The young Robert visited his uncle and namesake on the island; his friend Kevin Ayers, the composer of "Joy of a Toy," left the band and stayed there, indulging in a hedonistic, anti-work-ethic lifestyle summed up by his album title *Yes We Have No Mañanas, So Get Your Mañanas Today* (1976). He had decided against hope and in favor of happiness.

His presentation of a guitar sound absorbed in its own daydreams, and dancing with itself, is not expressive like that of the prominent guitarists of the time but introverted. But then it self-confidently withdraws and goes on ahead of the other musicians and thus introduces the autonomous toy, which embodies neither pure subservience and function (for cuddling) nor an uncanny rebellion of the inanimate—the toy as a third possibility between act and passion. Ayers gives expression to an elegant subjectlessness conceived as neither machinelike nor minimalistic. Cosima von Bonin's soft toys are also acquainted with this other, highly personal state of inanimateness, of being ready-to-hand, which is not coterminous with subservience and use value.

But the question that arises here is not just what the toy's personality would be, both literally and figuratively (what type of person), but what constitutes the toys' use, what service they provide before one gets a look at their faces, before they become uncanny or cute—the latter being a false straightforwardness that the artist also makes fun of with the letter sculpture of the same name (*Cute [Pink Version]*, 2018). For how can I know that the furry representations of underwater creatures, seashells, or octopuses, or of comic-book figures not based on nature, are playthings? Especially since I wish to see them as an alternative, critique, correction, or further development of sculpture itself? Well, first of all it is the softness described above. They pose no potential danger to children, even if the latter's motor skills are still untrained or go out of whack: one cannot hurt oneself by throwing them or pummeling somebody with them. Instead, one is encouraged to use them as pillows or cuddly blankets; they are particularly close to one when one is lying down or leaning back, just as they themselves are usually leaning back or reclining—here too in contradiction with all notions of sculptural standing.

The fact that many of the soft toys wear their eyelids at half-mast or are even asleep has occasionally been read as an allegory of neoliberal exhaustion—an interpretation repeatedly suggested not least by the artist herself with work and exhibition titles containing the word “fatigue.” According to this reading, they are embodiments of the familiar symptomatology of the overload caused by the obligation—for those who are their own bosses—to dominate their own psychological makeup in order to remain competitive as an outsourced Me, Inc., or—for female employees—to identify emotionally and sexually with their job. This is a pronounced trait of this fluffy workforce, but its other, at least equally important aspect is that of standby mode, as indicated by their tired eyes. Soft toys spend the whole day waiting to be addressed and used. A crucial meaning of the toy is its pliability. It is always available—to anyone and everyone. It is not monogamous. It waits for you, always passive, always usable, for whatever the purpose might be. Between these episodes: standby mode—energy-saving.

Toys must help children gain access to the world, since they can all too easily become afraid of it. This is also the case for adults who have never fully succeeded at accessing this world and making themselves at home in it, or who didn’t want to succeed at doing so because the subject’s status is then ultimately somewhat boring: always doing, deciding, transitive and active. Boring. As a child, I gave my soft toys names and had them experience things, usually as part of a larger community of animals. But at some point, my power and their pliability began to bore me. I had them form political parties and get themselves elected to parliament. My favorite teddy bear, “Brummi” (or “Grumpy”), who was in fact genuinely grumpy, became the leader of the Social Democrats; his “son,” little “Petz,” led the KPT, the Communist Party of Animals; the enormous “Putz,” my brother’s teddy bear, was the leading Christian Democrat; and a little monkey named “Quietschi” (or “Squeaky”) was the head of the Free Democrats (this was at the time when Walter Scheel held that role in reality).

However, I had a (philosophical) problem with these now activated animals. How do I justify their autonomy, their subjectivity? How can they have various political agendas, when I know that their insides consist of nothing but sawdust? Sawdust and no skeleton? I solved this problem with a bit of theology, a little bit like the Christian God, who also, simply by claiming that humanity was created in His image, must logically have given it a few divine attributes. Hence I reasoned that my soul—which even my atheist parents had taught me was immaterial and did not necessarily coincide with my body in its extension—could also be accommodated inside the soft toys, in which case they would be animate. However, since they were also independent creatures, this made them autonomous as well—just as human beings can also sin and mess up, despite the fact that they were created in the image of God. My soul was not my individuality but merely harbored the potential for individuality; it was more something like the raw material from which "Brummi" could then produce his Willy-Brandt-like subjectivity himself.

This understanding of the emancipation of soft toys, if not of plush objects in general, is more interesting, of course, than simply using them for projection. It is also more in tune with the times: it relates to the ecological imperatives of the present as a Brechtian *Lehrstück* or didactic play does to the problems of the Third International. There is a magnificent Roxy Music track, a dramatically overwrought lament called "In Every Dream Home a Heartache," released in 1973, that sounds like an homage to modernist architecture and the language used to advertise its products; and it celebrates the lifestyle of its rich and carefree customers as a melancholy abyss which ultimately becomes spiritual distress. The song's first-person narrator informs us that he furnishes his dream bungalow with plenty of luxurious functional components, but the main attraction is its other occupant, an inflatable doll. Just like me with the sawdust in my teddy bear, he too has a problem with the doll's interior, the proof of its aliveness—or of the opposite due to the absence of flesh and organs. His solution is more materialist and more metaphorical than mine: "My breath is inside you," he knows. Breath—that is more concrete, more material than soul.

But he also declaims this: "Your skin is *like* vinyl." Of course, her skin is not like vinyl; it is *made of* vinyl. Still, he enjoys the fact that he enjoys her skin as skin; and then on top of that, it is made of, or like, vinyl. I buy myself a simulation; I take pleasure in its authenticity and then sink into an easy chair, leaning back, relaxed, into the fact that it is a simulation. And everything is under control: the virtue of the doll is its doll-like rather than its anthropomorphic quality. This is true toyness—but Bryan Ferry primarily stages his pleasure in it as the abyss of his masculinity, whereas in Cosima von Bonin's work the position assumed is rather that of those who are almost subjects but ultimately not. After all, the doll owner standing before the abyss is proud to stage himself as the doll's servant—this final masochistic twist cannot be experienced with soft toys.

Their skin is not like vinyl but like fur. The softness I mentioned at the beginning of this essay is the effect not of something homogeneous like the property of a material, but of many little hairs, real or artificial. Softness is always associated with large quantities; the abyss of the softness of an animal's coat, like similar sensations with soft fabrics, is the sublime of the incalculable number of threads that have gone into the fabric or the animal's coat, the hair. Their density, even in the smallest of spaces, is as dizzying as the infinite range of numbers between zero and one—in contrast to the infinity of whole numbers and its masculinism. On the other hand, the hair must not be long; it must not stream in the wind. Hair must be short in order to be thick, and thick in order to be soft. This thickness is the resistance, in the realm of cute things, to the pure passivity of being stroked and lying on the floor.

Many of CvB's soft toys sit on the floor and seem to be playing or negotiating. Unlike Mike Kelley's soft toys, with which they are often compared, hers do not hide, nor have they been tragically swept under a rug or a piece of cloth, but instead utilize the latter as a playing field. They are anything but heroic, of course, yet they seem to be in control of the situation. If cuteness—as argued by Sianne Ngai in her influential treatise *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting*—amounts to an aestheticization of powerlessness, then the penetration of autonomized embodiments of this aestheticized powerlessness into the proper sphere of the aesthetic, that of the artwork, seems to be a step toward their emancipation. And if their other role or function in CvB's installations is to allegorize neoliberal dispositions, then the appearances of the soft toys add up to proposals of emancipation for all of us, albeit always undermined by an acknowledgment of the project's cheerful or melancholy hopelessness.

For it might, of course, be objected that this emancipation of the powerless in the code of cuteness—provided the latter doesn't disappear in the process—backfires. The objection would be similar to critical theory's classic argument against the "free" solo in jazz, when it explains that this eruption of creativity is only there to more fully entrench the thirty-two-bar framework of the pop standard by passing off the "prison" of the format as room in which to move. Or that the smart character in a Hollywood film is only there to formulate a ready-made, off-the-rack cleverness without any practical value. In this way, cuteness would in the end remain primarily soft, since those that embody it (the animals and objects) remained untouched by the artistic environment and ultimately reentered the infantilizing code.

Here we meet old and newer theories of subversion and above all what (Western) observers think they encounter in Japan, where there is a decades-old discussion of the category of *kawaii*, a concept of cuteness that plays on all its poles, including unrelieved subservience, masochistic subversion, the unsettling of every rigid position, seduction, et cetera. I cannot go into the subject in greater depth here and do not wish to accredit either the skeptics or the partisans of *kawaii* as a subversive aesthetic. Rather, I would describe the entire complex as a theater of possibilities (subversion would be one of them) that always requires contexts and additional codings, but that—in conjunction with the heterotopic model of a specifically (not arbitrarily) different reality, the art exhibition being one example—remains worth considering and is played on virtuosically by CvB. It also should not be forgotten that sailor's clothing, which was at the center of *kawaii* culture, is also present early on in works by CvB, for example in *Bruder Poul sticht in See* (Brother Poul Goes to Sea). Of course, maritime dress codes are also a classic component of a gay male tradition, a phenomenon that may have to do both with sailors' impressive strength and with the fact that, with their stereotypical traditional clothing, strong sailors are also wearing the clothing of little girls and boys and comic-book ducks.

The crucial thing about CvB's "emancipated cuteness" is that she plants numerous traces of strong meanings which have influenced her work but achieves a powerful aesthetic effect precisely by not readily revealing what they are. She cuts off the first and third parts of the suite, as it were, retaining only "Joy of a Toy." However, more recent toys that are conceived more in terms of character than of genre (or fabric and material) once again inject a different nuance into the toy concept. The most recent toys to do this were Elmo from *Sesame Street* but above all the old antagonist of Bugs Bunny and other Tex Avery characters, Daffy Duck. Daffy has effectively moved on from many years of toy existence to become the bearer of certain character traits which are now no longer soft and pliable but have hardened over the years: egotistical, shrewd, pompous, megalomaniacal, but also cowardly. In Daffy, we would then have the classic end of emancipation, the clinging to partial successes in the mode of a character, a personality—which can then be relied upon in the good sense as well as the bad.

But there is one other toy in CvB's exhibitions that may contrast with the animals and characters—or else may complement them: the toy rocket, which displays a similar ambiguity between an almost clichéd sculptural/phallic readymade and a certain suggestion of the child's room. While the standby mode of the soft toys would be an eternal, dreamless sleep—Snow White waiting for the alarm clock to ring, for the summons of ideology—the pretty little rockets in standby mode are disarmed and exude the peacefulness of a contained Cold War that has long since ended and that one might by now long to return to, the same way that one longs to return to childhood. When one was waiting for something, anything. A phone call, a satisfaction. Or live ammunition.

DEMON CLEARING SERVICE

CLARA DRECHSLER

What is the Daffy formula? It is this:

“To be a Daffy, a character must first and foremost be like Daffy. Not only must they be congenitally selfish, devious, grandiose, and craven, but all of these characteristics must be magnified to grotesque proportions due to the pointed cruelty of the universe.”

Apparently there is a new sheriff and/or messiah in town. This obscure figure bearing the aforementioned characteristics is introduced to me jotted down on the notepad as “Duck. Black. Ill-tempered. Analog. Not a clue about anything. Friend. Better.”

Chuck Jones, one of the creators of the Looney Tunes antagonist Daffy Duck, once claimed in an interview that Daffy was actually a chicken in drag. Drag, why not—a convenient way to defuse the ostentatious cruelty of the universe. Drag is the polar opposite of merely passing. Drag has to stand out, and it needs a stage of some kind; it is the crown and host of the delight in seeking attention! “As long as you can say I was adored once too, everything is in order.”

There’s no one who would rather be a Daffy than Cosima. Sadly, the requisite qualities are not sufficiently pronounced in her. But perhaps they do share the same demons. Daffy can—at any time—call upon his unfettered hubris, yet he remains highly driven nonetheless. *Backstage Talent Only* (2023, p. 196) reveals the severity with which this fame-seeker is affected by the somewhat devastating judgment, while its companion piece *Dämonenräumdienst* (Demon Clearing Service, 2023, p. 199) tops it all off with a mean example of a coping strategy.

In the panels of *Shit & Chanel*, we see Daffy’s struggle against falling into oblivion, disappearing behind the dark curtain in the eternal darkness of the backstage. Black ink used to be the enemy in the original cartoon. (Yet Daffy is not exactly the only cartoon hero who was actively threatened by his own cartoonist’s tools.) Daffy fights in vain. A grim fate. Elsewhere, however, he emerges from the equally black material background as a

Vergeblichkeit seiner Anstrengungen.

---

beautifully quilted, jet-black relief to mock a couple of rosy piggies hanging out lethargically in a cement mixer. Who is the demon now?

Given that she would rather chop off her own hand than actually produce her art herself, Queen Cosima gets up extremely early. The world needs to be ruled. Orders are issued from her bed to servants and court purveyors who are merely waiting to sew, quilt, appliqué, or cobble together art according to her ideas. Before this can ensue, though, higher powers have evoked the *Dämonenräumdienst*.

Our anxious queen (insignia: a chunky necklace with a clonk-heavy sterling silver *Angsthase*—a scaredy-cat, only our German scaredy-cats are bunny-shaped—and an inherited Hermès Kelly bag on a cheap-ass belt) needs not only her artistic collaborators, her workshop manager, and her assistants, but an entourage of courtiers, yes-men and no-men, masters of ceremonies, walkers, dog-walkers, disappointment counselors, payroll clerks, innocent, potentially wooden toy boys and bodyguards, a legion of drag stars, but also toxic masculinity performers, who occasionally present her with sacred implements such as brass knuckles, inflatable morning stars, switchblades, Louisville Sluggers, or sand-filled blackjacks that make her feel instantly better. A balanced glam/butch level is guaranteed.

Material and (self-)medication. “Smart, independent, a drunk—I’m a lady.” Quite the noble concept of life! Cosima is ideally cast. Unhealthy though, regrettably. Irrevocably renouncing this option may result in an extremely harsh life. Anxiety and social phobia, the continuation of depression by other means. Endless detoxes with accompanying art therapy and confessions of your feelings in a group until you reach the point where all you have to do is tinker with the combination of pills that will make life more or less bearable. Once you have found it, you are even more dissatisfied because, for some unknown reason, you miss the friction caused by mood swings.

“I want my depression back. I am no longer interested in anything. I used to be a workhorse, always a drug-addicted animal, but an animal nonetheless." An absence of depression is not the solution either. For all the medication, there ought to remain just enough of it to make art possible. A slight bad temper, bitchiness, a few residual demons, kept on a short leash. A finely tuned unease about the world. The desire to manipulate instead of being manipulated. A few Daffy traits are helpful in this situation, despite all the (apparent) futility of his efforts.

Cosima's crustaceans and mollusks have lent themselves as manifestations of girlish attributes such as timidity, fearfulness, and vulnerability. Clam eyes peer anxiously from their shells, a lobster gets caught uneasily in the cement mixer of life (all signature pieces), and they had good reason to do so, given that their supposedly hard shells are made of velvet and plush. They were hiding behind cutie culture and probably drank in secret, the little shits.

Despite their sewn-up appearance, the classic *Lappen* (rags) seemed neither particularly shy nor overly feminine to me. At best as feminine as a man's skirt. (Latest gender nuisance: straight women now wear men's skirts. Not to be confused with kilts!) The *Umkleidekabinen* (changing rooms) in the *Church of Daffy*, casually draped plaid fabric panels, speak to me more than those mindfulness tents created from gauze, threads, or other rather bridal-veil-like material that I have recently stumbled upon in work by other women artists. (Or am I merely imagining this because I'm developing a general hostility toward delicate gossamer fabrics?)

It is impossible to negotiate the feminine and masculine in Cosima's work without recourse to drag and a certain gay aesthetics; in fact, as our queen, she is indeed a drag queen herself, since queens, queen mums, alcoholic divas, ladies, *dames*, and other bombshell roles of femininity have long since been relegated to where non-biologism renders them bearable.

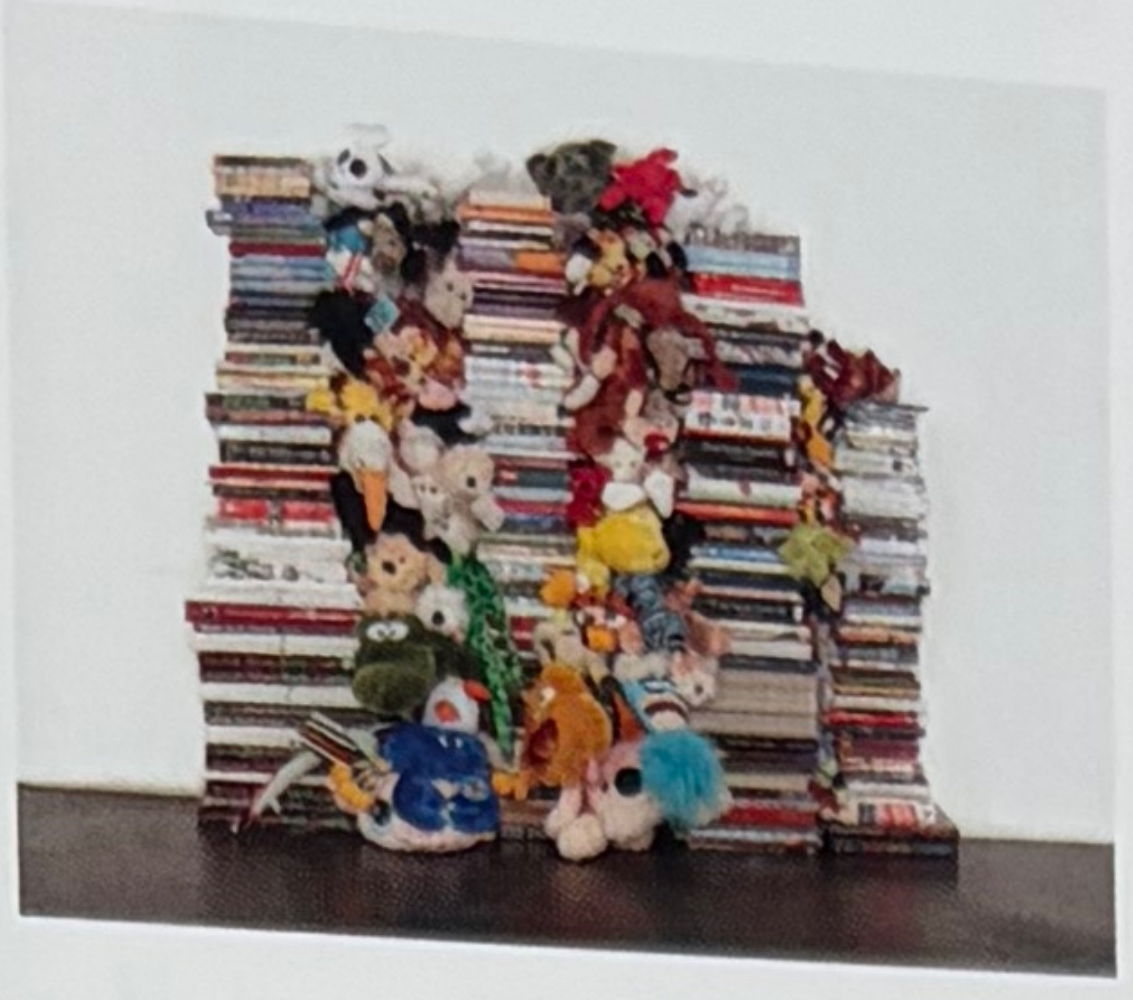
In terms of fabrics, velvet and shine prevail on the one hand, and plaid on the other—plaid seems to have a suggestive power that prompted Cosima in her younger years to buy a Burberry skirt especially for the purpose of hitchhiking from the Remscheid

Clara Drechsler als Schwarze Ente im Kölner Karneval, 2015 / dressed as a black duck for Cologne's carnival festivities, 2015

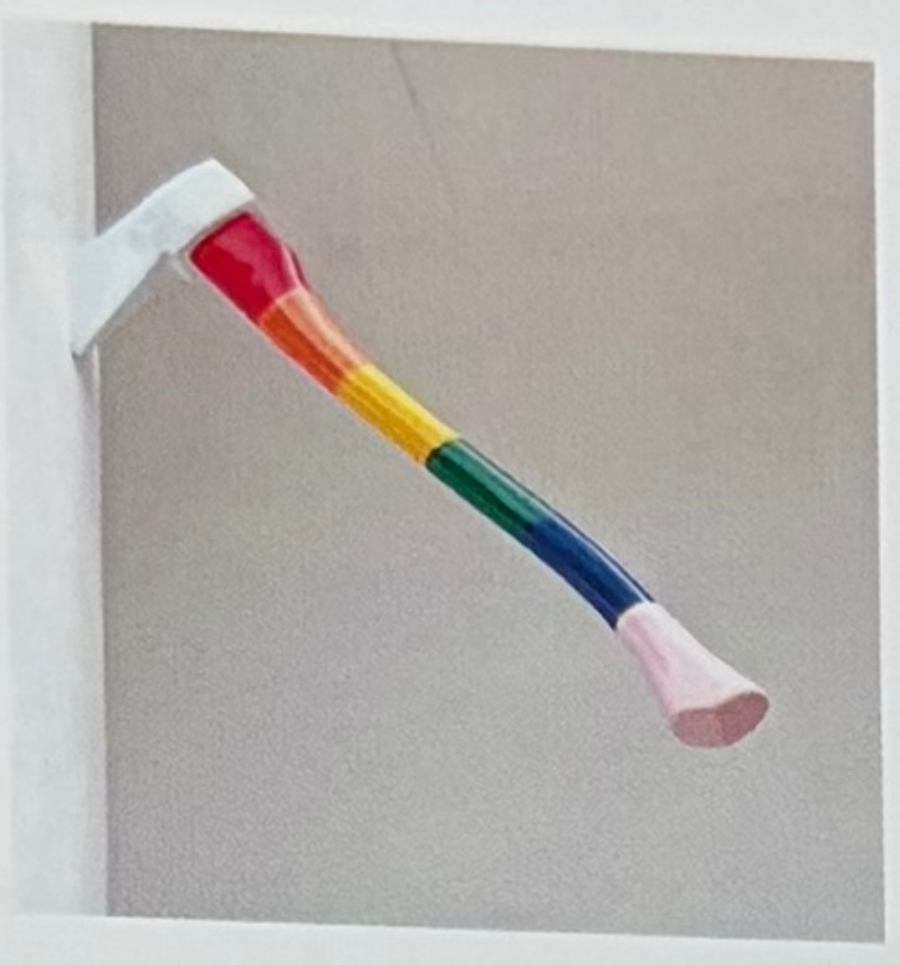
service station to Hamburg. It was intended to nip any transgressions in the bud. A manipulative impudence. A Daffy move, perhaps.

Back to Daffy. Ultimately, he is the redeemer who saves the day, who gives even the last floppy soft toys a backbone. After long battles, the *Church of Daffy* has become the ne plus ultra for the manipulator and self-promoter: his own church. In triumphant black epoxy resin with mineral components, he finally rests upon his rightful pedestal and preaches wearing a plaid loincloth. Adored by a mussel that in his presence solidified into safety glass, a material that's tough as nails. Just as well that Cosima has found someone who knows their way around epoxy resin.

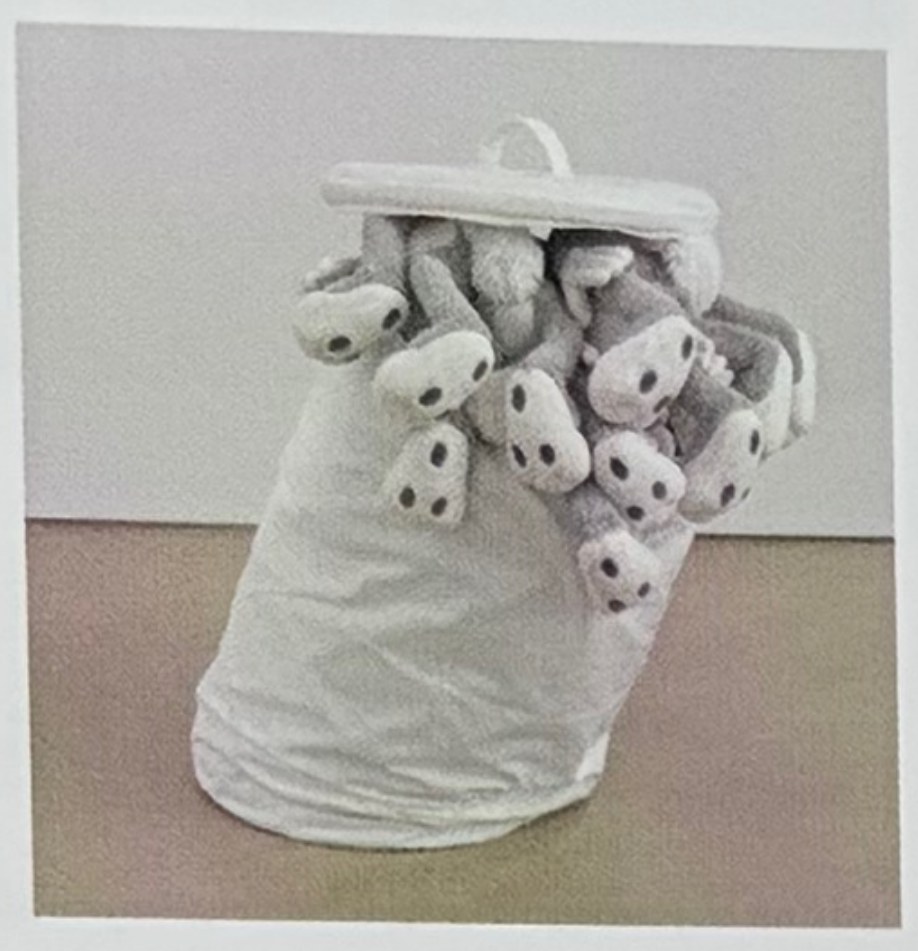
VERZEICHNIS DER AUSGESTELLTEN WERKE
LIST OF EXHIBITED WORKS



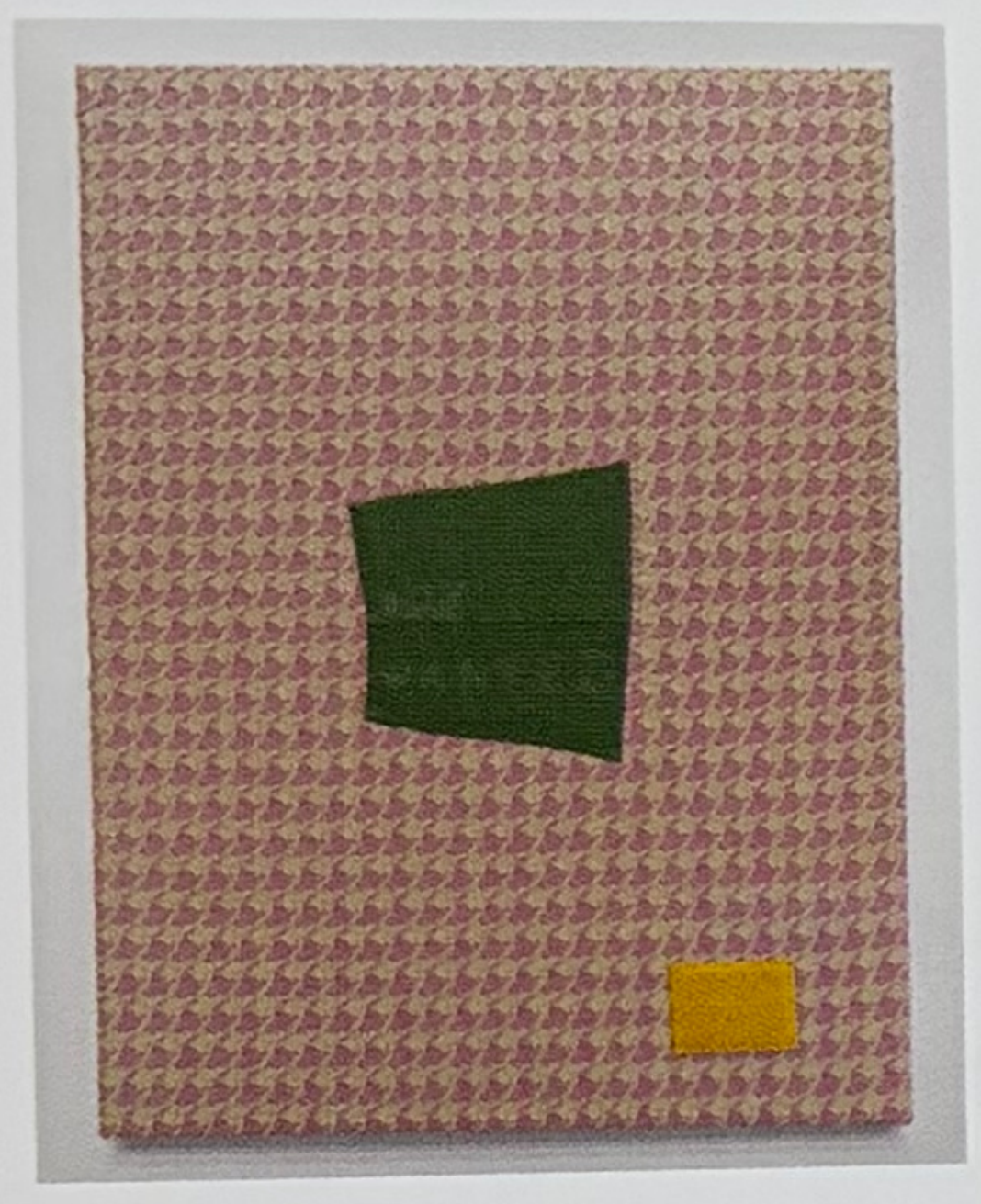
2016, 2007/2016
143 Bücher, 13 DVDs, 1 VHS-Kassette, Stofftiere
143 books, 13 DVDs, 1 VHS cassette, soft toys
150 × 180 × 60 cm
Privatsammlung / Private collection
54/55



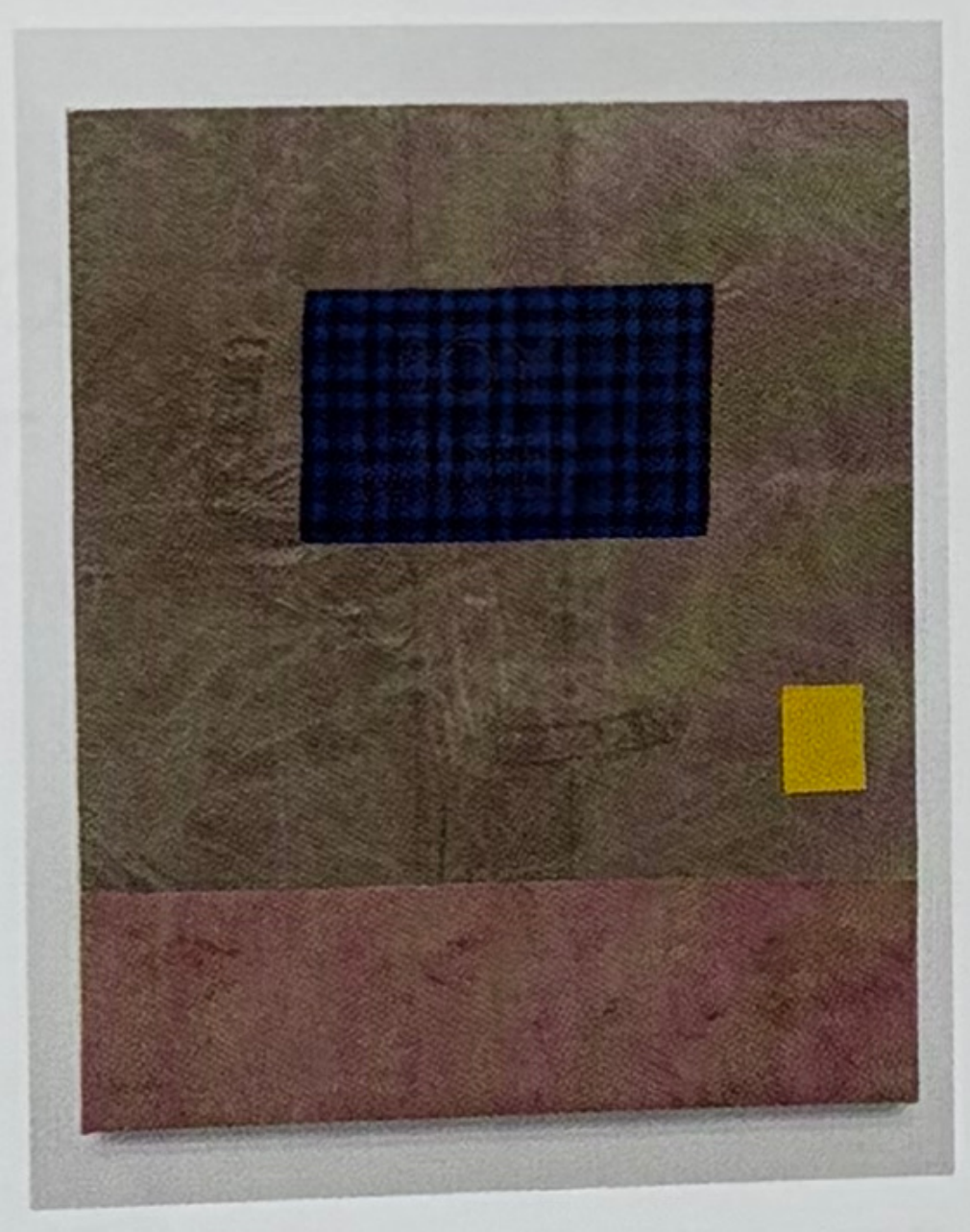
AXE 152, 2022
Epoxidharz, Lack
Epoxy resin, lacquer
152 × 45 × 10 cm
Sammlung Meyring
64



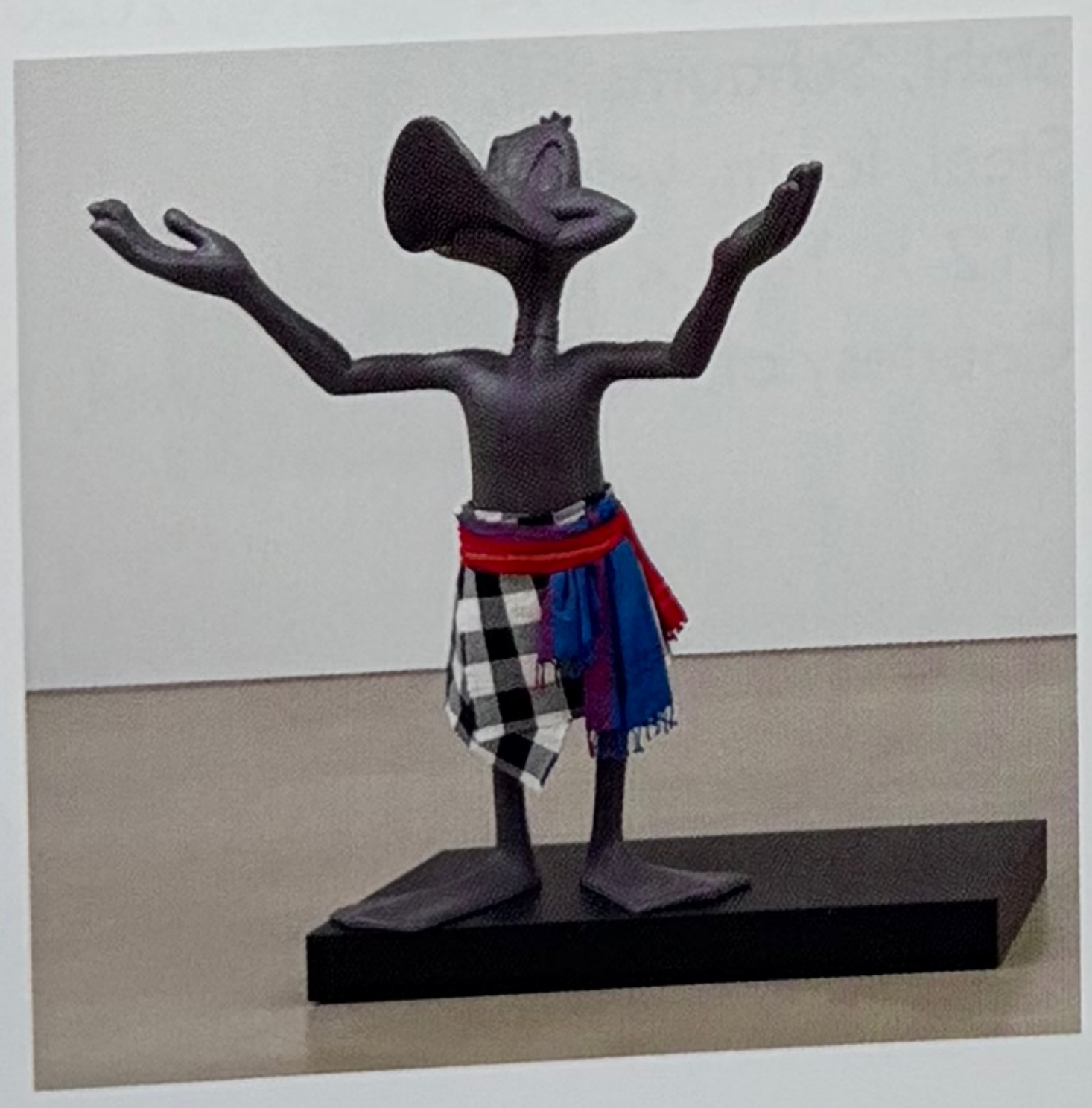
BLAME SHIFTING, 2020
Stahl, Kunststoff, Holz, Karton, Baumwolle, Bugs-Bunny-Stofftiere
Steel, plastic, wood, cardboard, cotton, Bugs Bunny soft toys
86 × 86 × 70 cm
Privatsammlung / Private collection
158



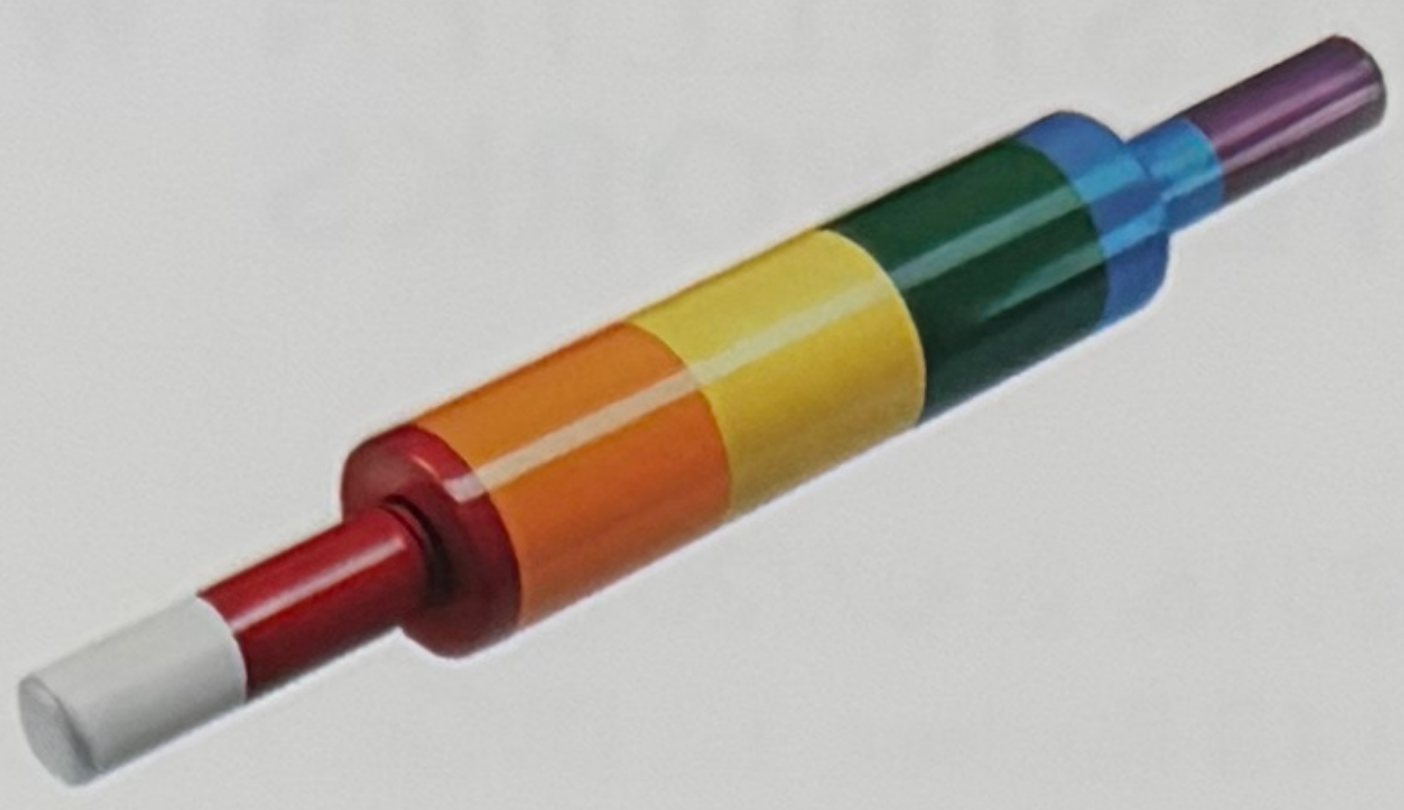
BOY AT WORK, 2023
Wolle, Baumwolle, Vlies
Wool, cotton, fleece
179 × 132 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Petzel, New York
79



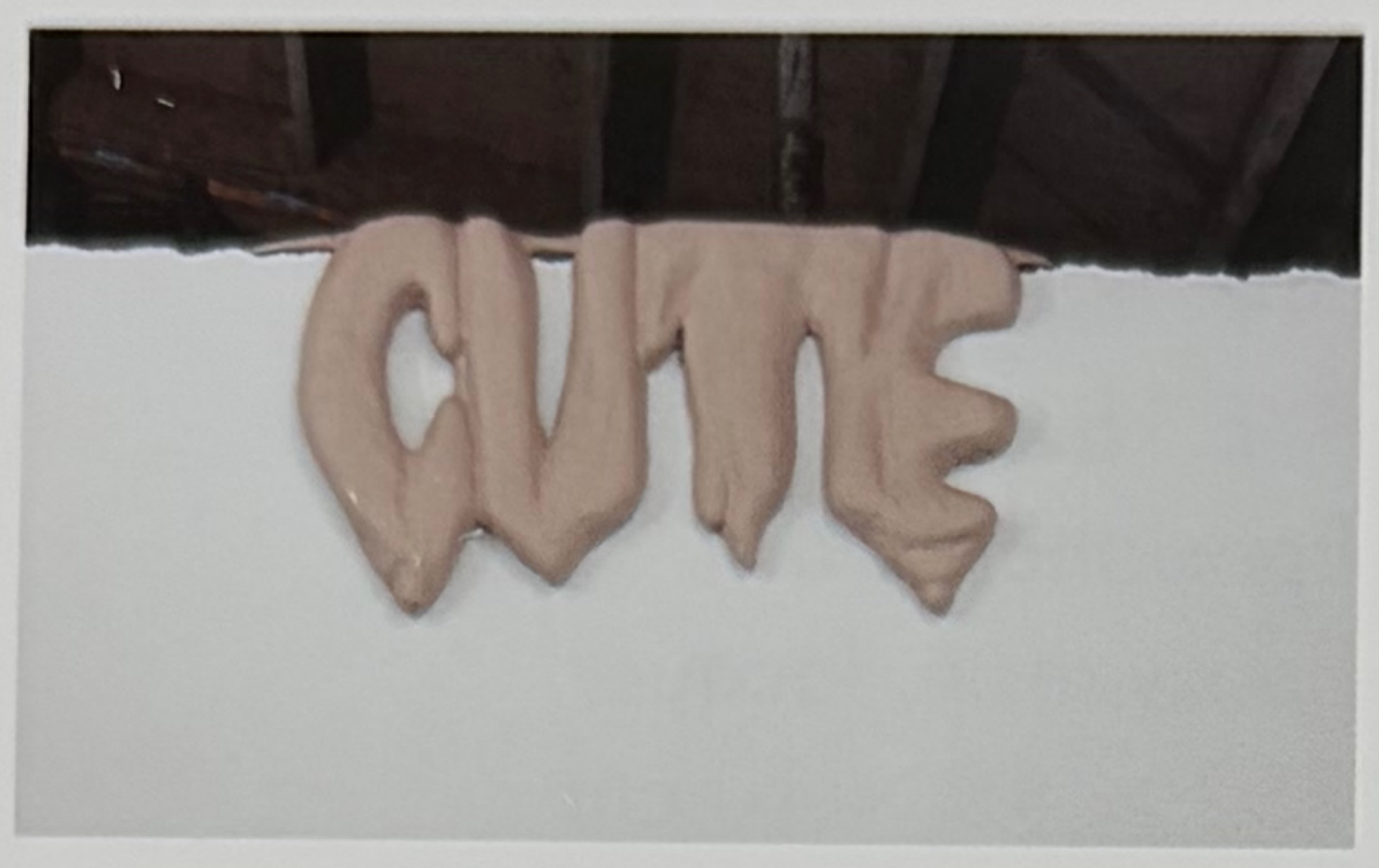
BOY WANTED, 2023
Heavy Cotton Drill, Wolle, Seidensamt, Vlies
Heavy cotton, wool, silk velvet, fleece
194 × 158 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Petzel, New York
83



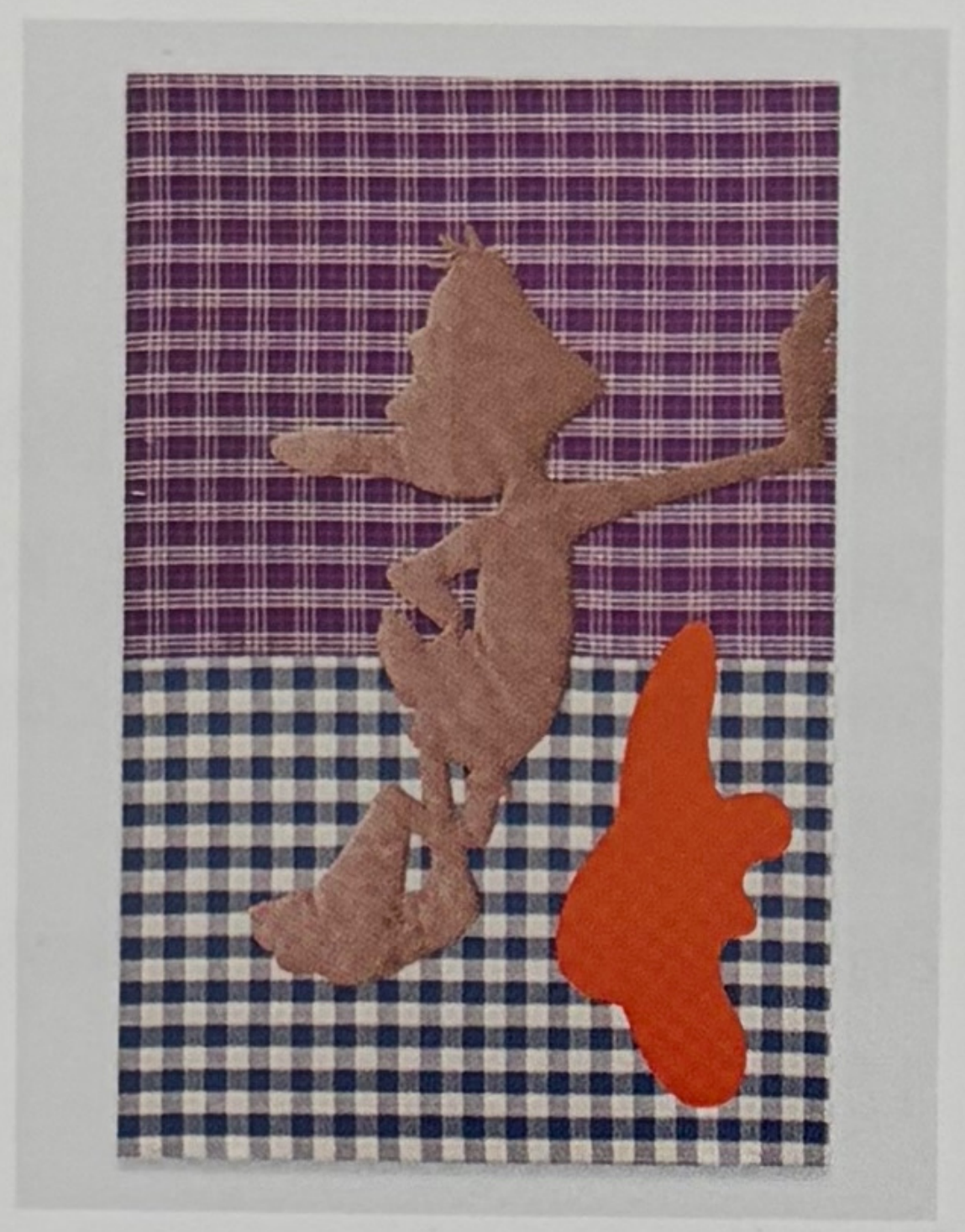
CHURCH OF DAFFY, 2023
Acrystal, Baumwolle
Acrystal, cotton
177 × 147 × 86 cm
Sockel: Holz, Lack / Plinth: wood, lacquer
18 × 145 × 84 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Petzel, New York
169



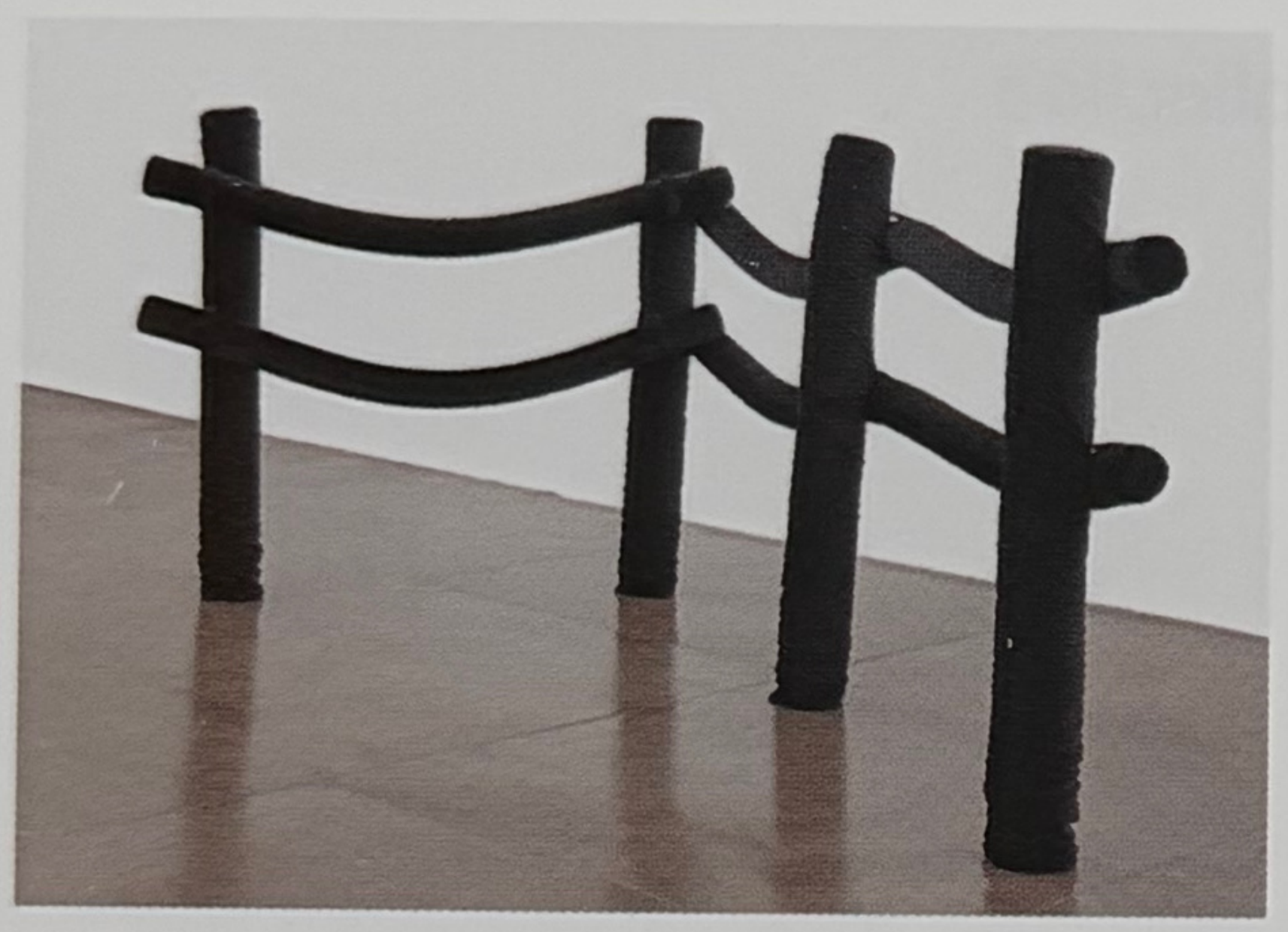
COLOUR WHEEL, 2007
Edelstahl, Lack, Polypropylen
Stainless steel, lacquer, polypropylene
47 × 6 cm
Edition 45/45
Sammlung Meyring
65



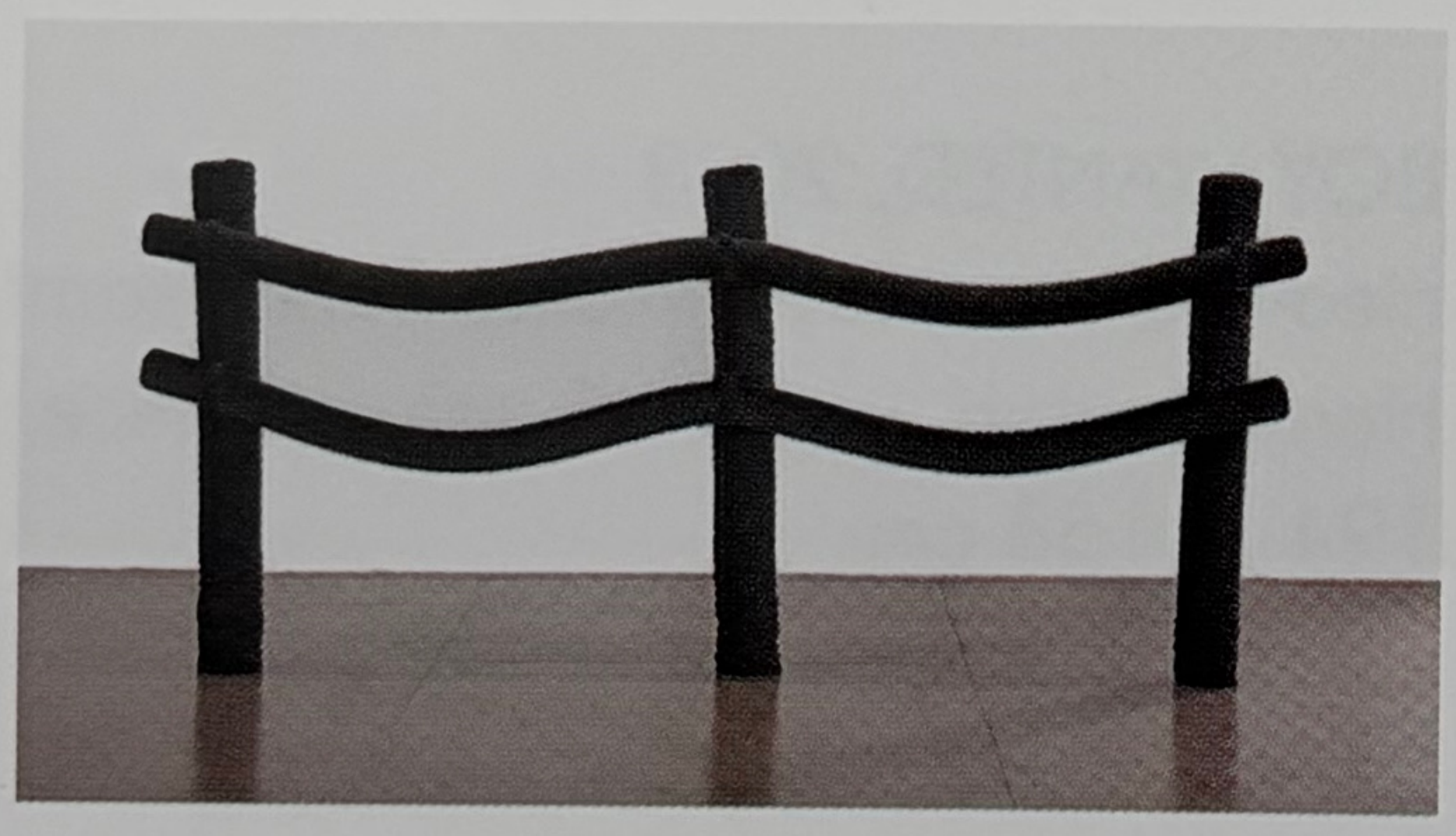
CUTE (PINK VERSION), 2018
Glasfaserverstärkter Kunststoff, Lack
Fiberglass-reinforced plastic, lacquer
41 × 61 × 46 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Petzel, New York
141



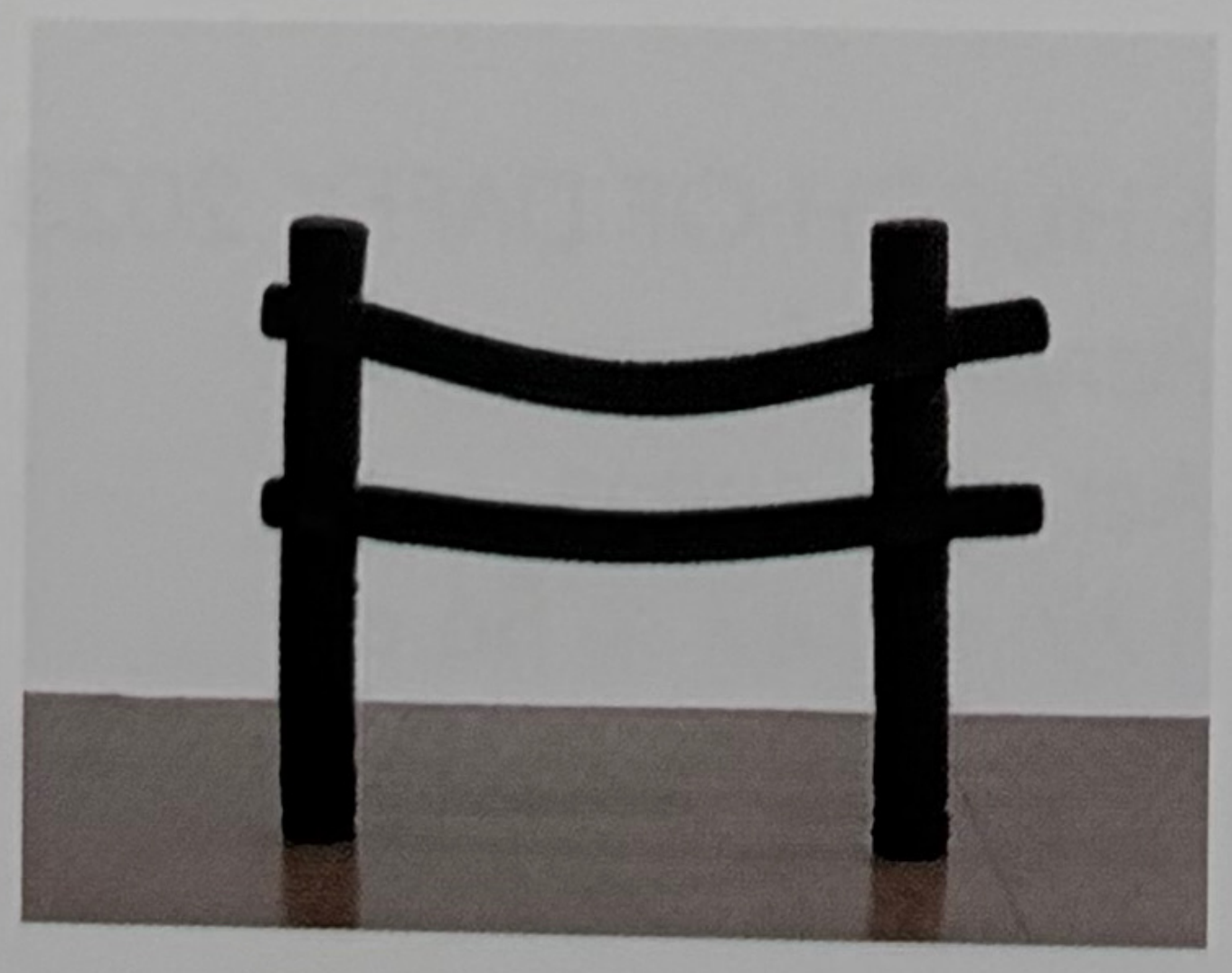
EMPORKÖMMLING, 2023
Seide, Baumwolle, Seidensamt, Vlies
Silk, cotton, silk velvet, fleece
198 × 126 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Petzel, New York
165



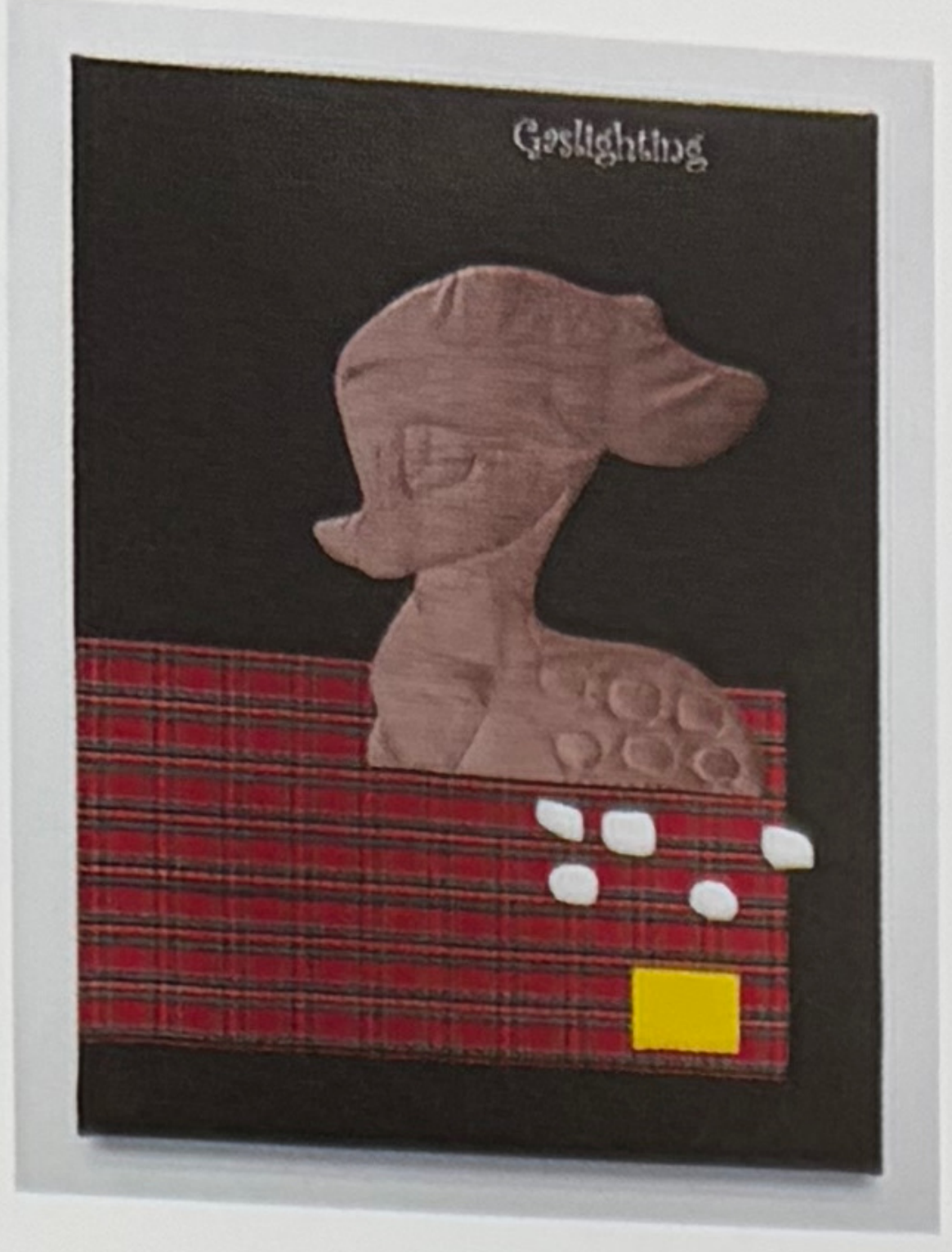
FENCE (CORNER VERSION), 2020
Stahl, Schaumstoff, Samt
Steel, foam, velvet
112 × 260 × 140 cm
Sammlung Meyring
58/59



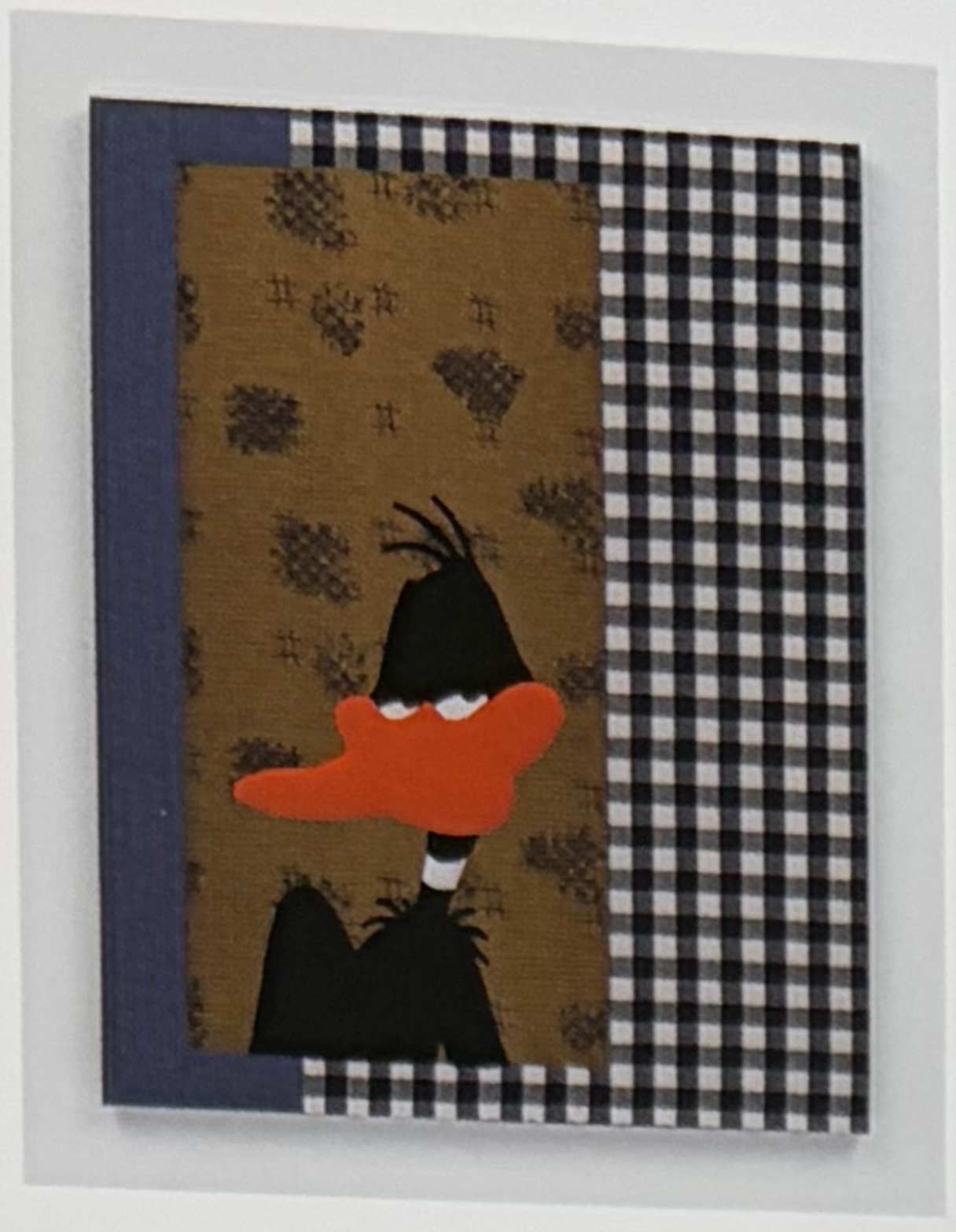
FENCE (LONG VERSION), 2020
Stahl, Schaumstoff, Samt
Steel, foam, velvet
112 × 260 × 21 cm
Sammlung Meyring
56/57



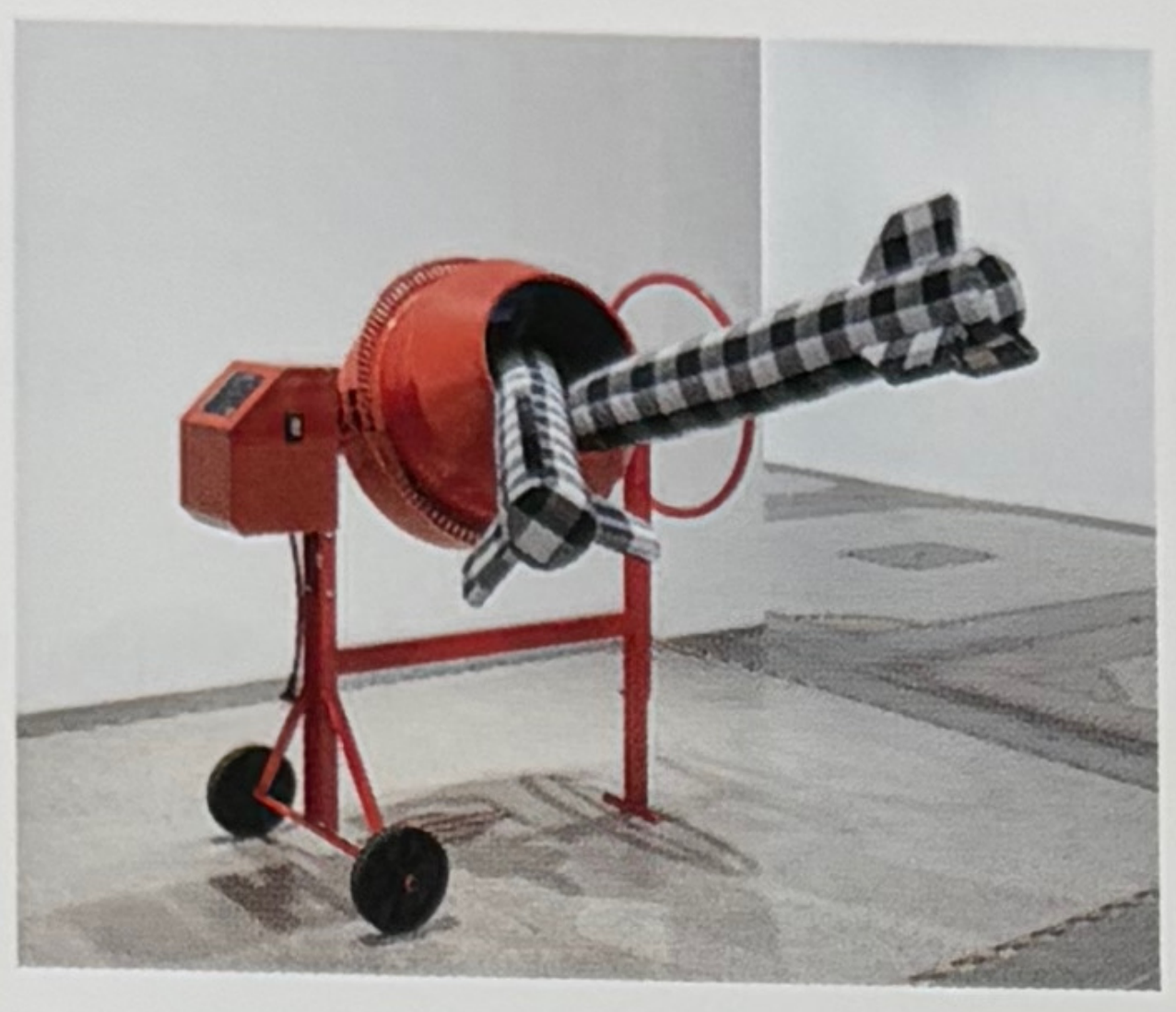
FENCE (SHORT VERSION), 2020
Stahl, Schaumstoff, Samt
Steel, foam, velvet
112 × 140 × 21 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Petzel, New York
60



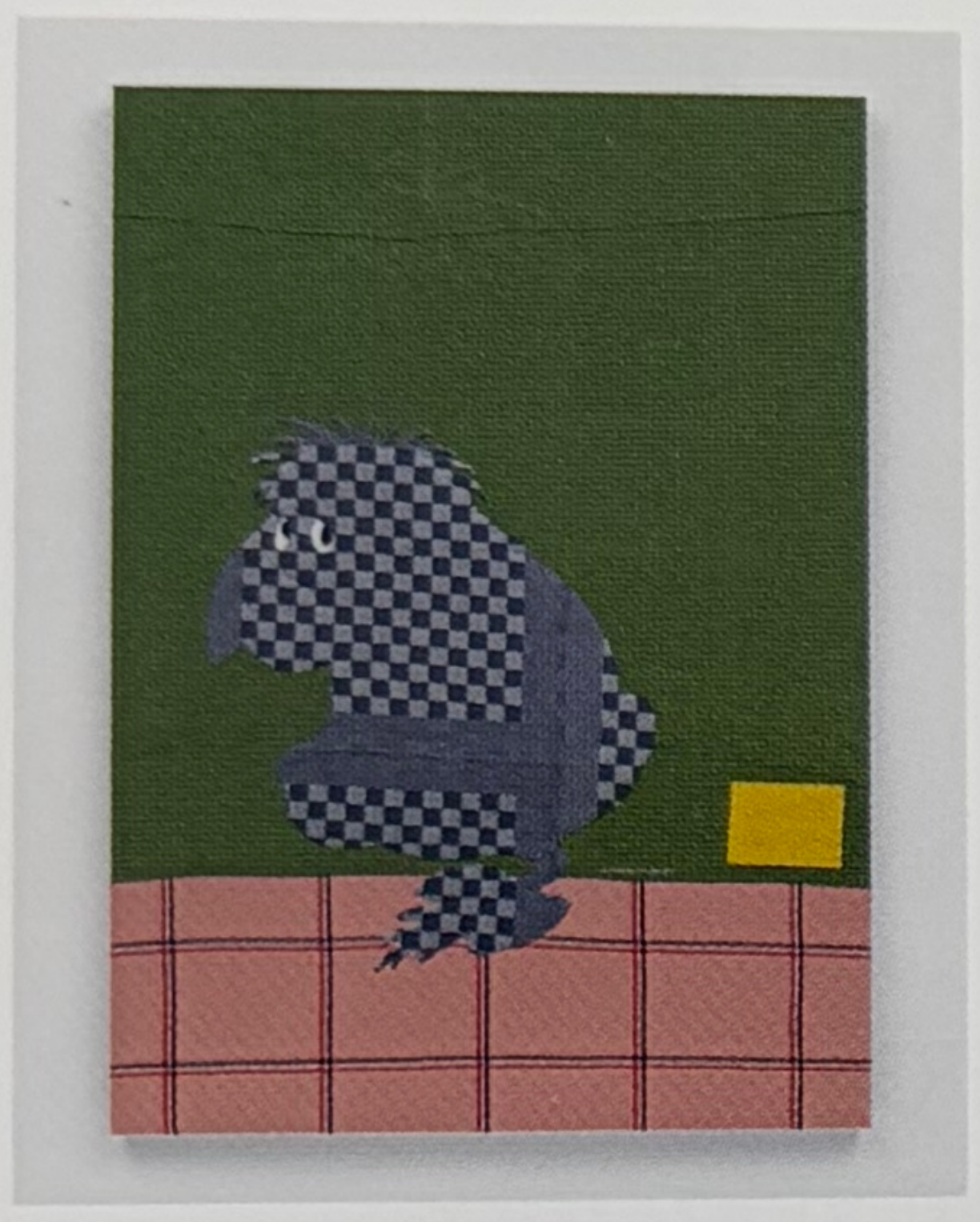
GASLIGHTING, 2023
Seide, Baumwolle, Wolle, Seidensamt, Vlies
Silk, cotton, wool, silk velvet, fleece
202 × 152 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Petzel, New York
87



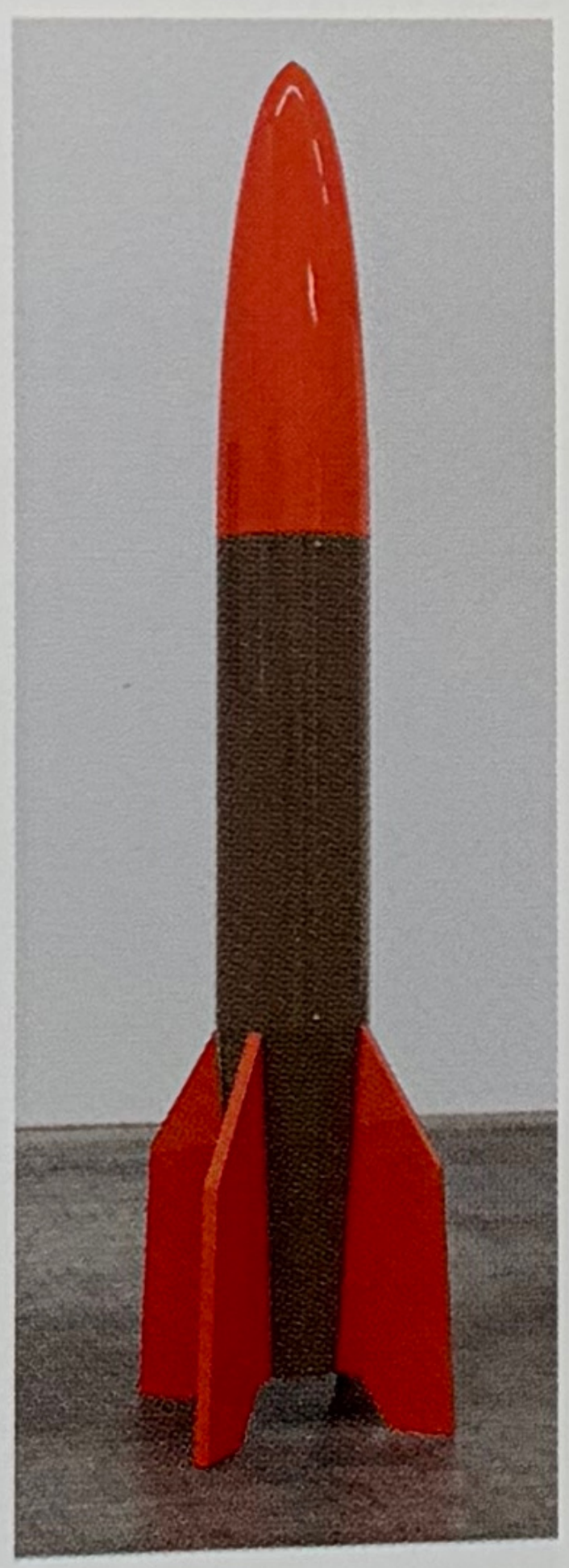
KALT MODERN TEUER, 2023
Samt, Seide, Baumwolle, Vlies
Velvet, silk, cotton, fleece
260 × 197 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Petzel, New York
161



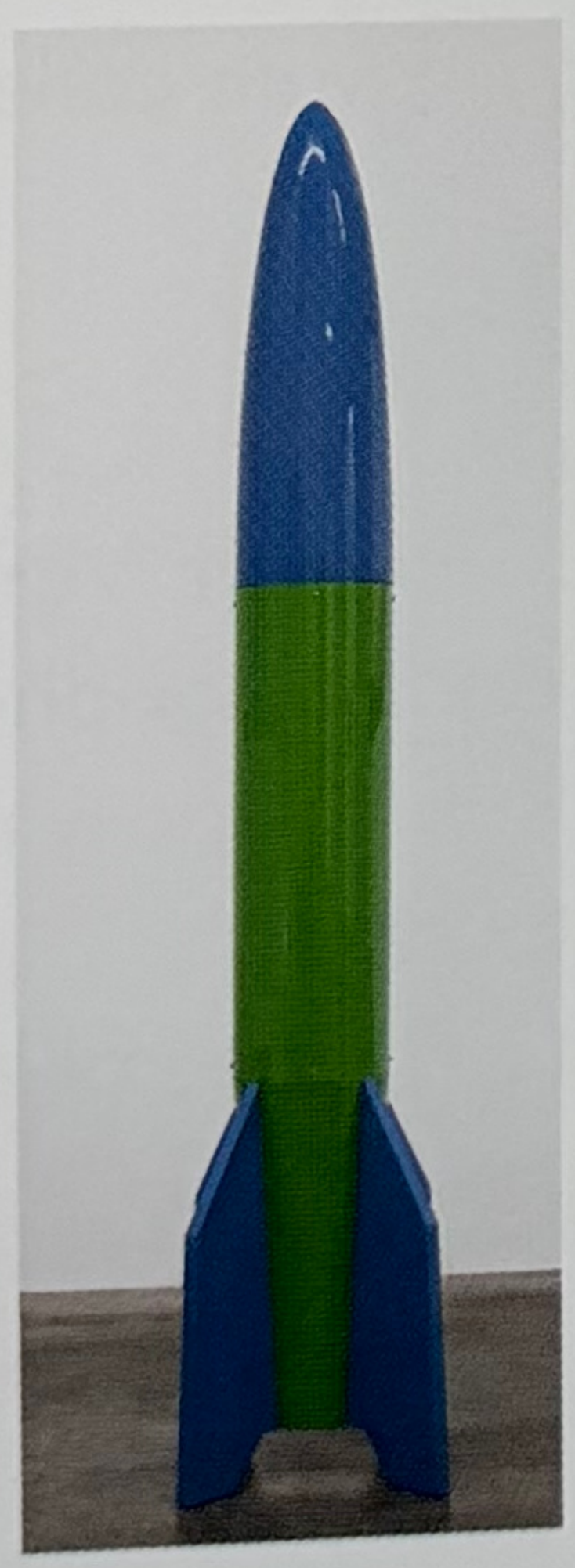
KINGS OF THE B, 2019
Zementmischer, Schaumstoff, Baumwolle
Concrete mixer, foam, cotton
132 × 127 × 96 cm
Privatsammlung / Private collection
129, 130



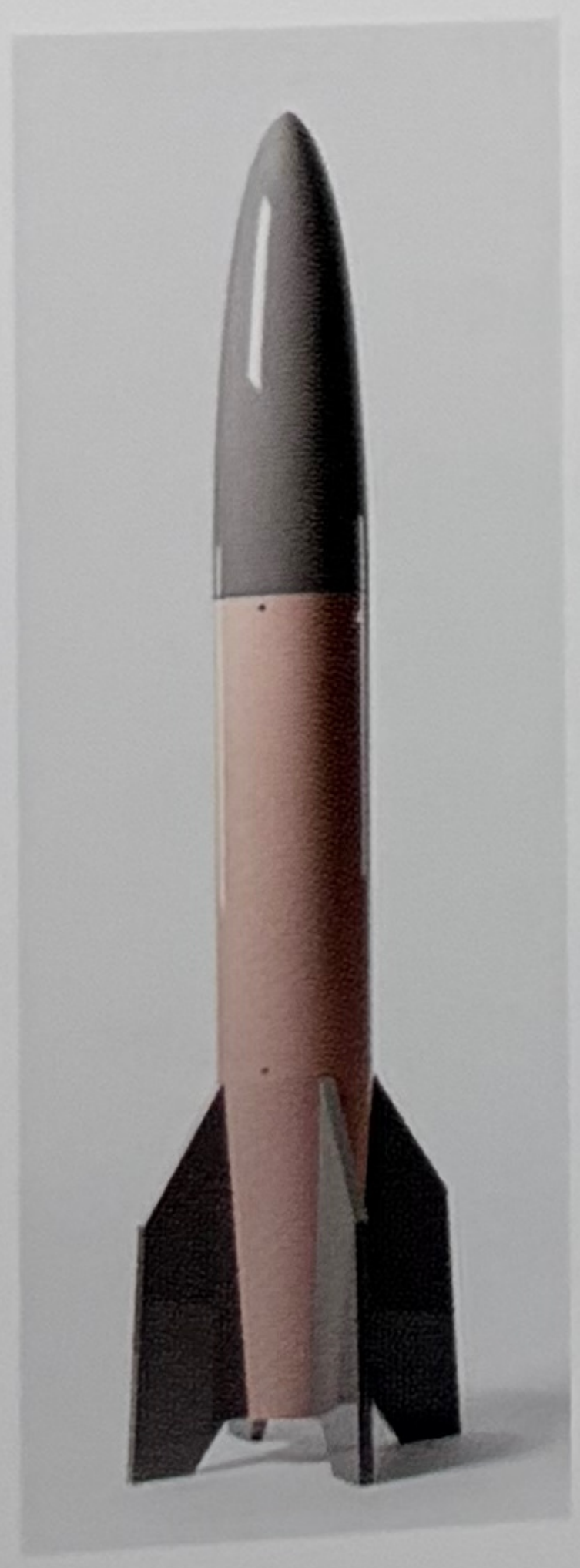
LE SNOBISME DE L'ARGENT, 2023
Wolle, Baumwolle, Vlies
Wool, cotton, fleece
194 × 136 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Petzel, New York
91



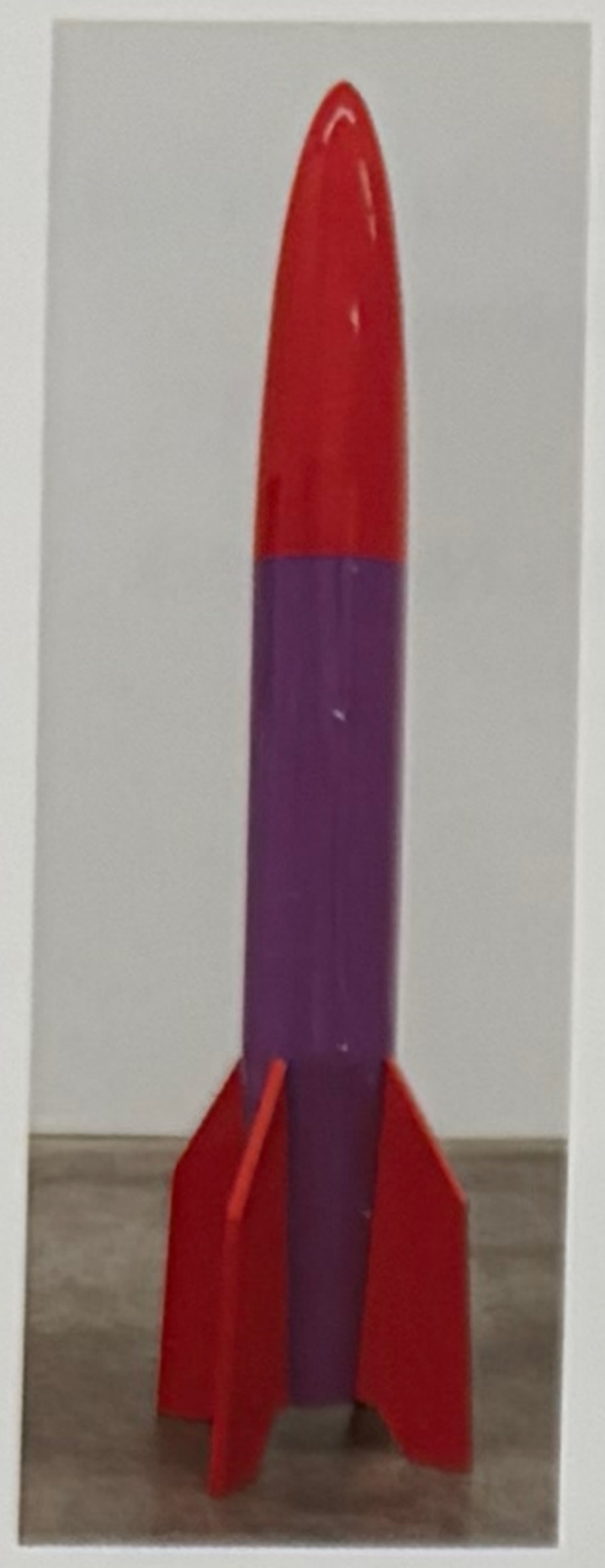
LOSER (BROWN RED VERSION), 2020
PVC, Stahl, Styropor, Epoxidharz, Lack
PVC, steel, styrofoam, epoxy resin, lacquer
220 × 56 × 56 cm
Privatsammlung / Private collection
51



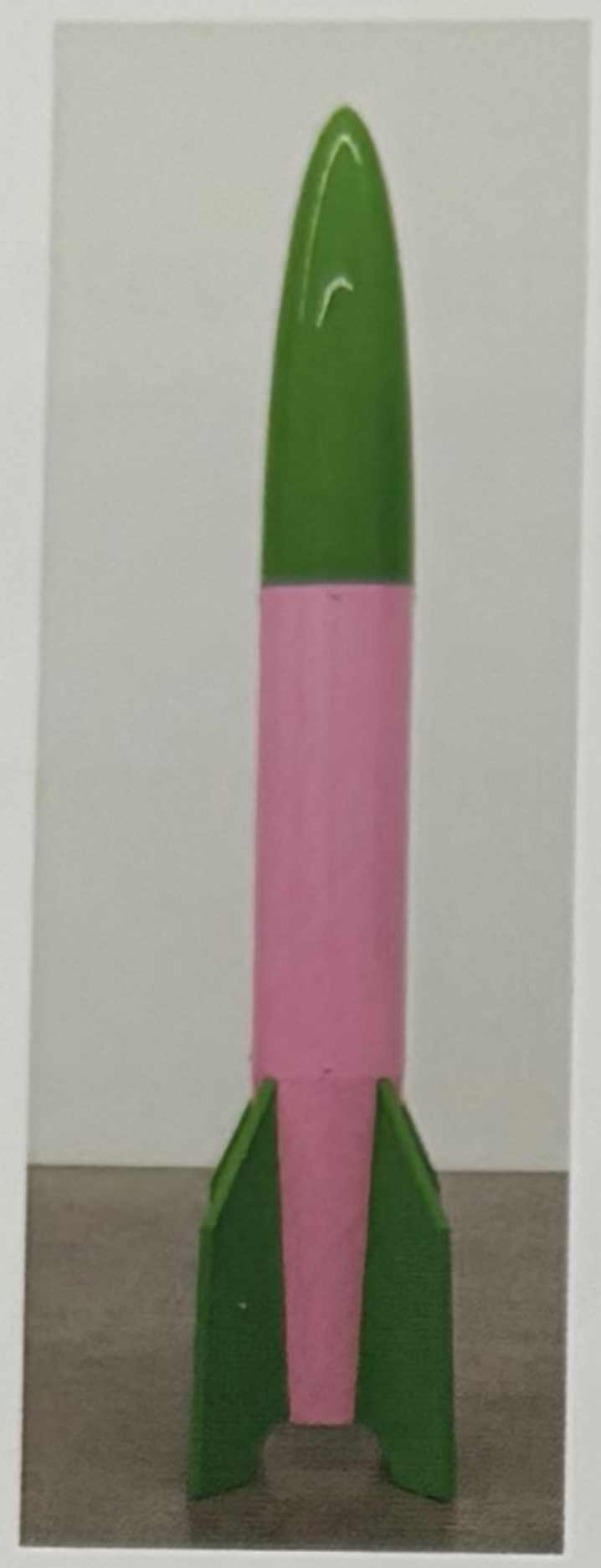
LOSER (GREEN BLUE VERSION), 2021
PVC, Stahl, Styropor, Epoxidharz, Lack
PVC, steel, styrofoam, epoxy resin, lacquer
220 × 56 × 56 cm
Privatsammlung / Private collection, Stuttgart
45



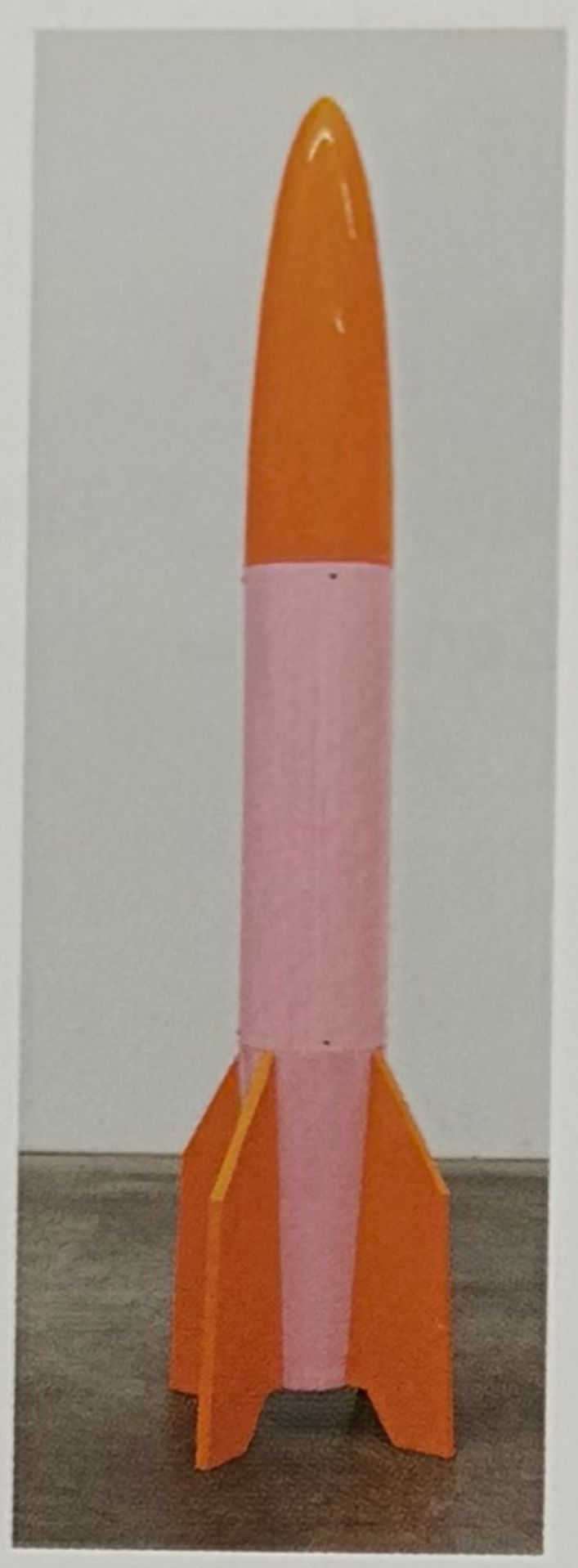
LOSER (GREY PINK VERSION), 2021
PVC, Stahl, Styropor, Epoxidharz, Lack
PVC, steel, styrofoam, epoxy resin, lacquer
220 × 56 × 56 cm
Privatsammlung / Private collection
31



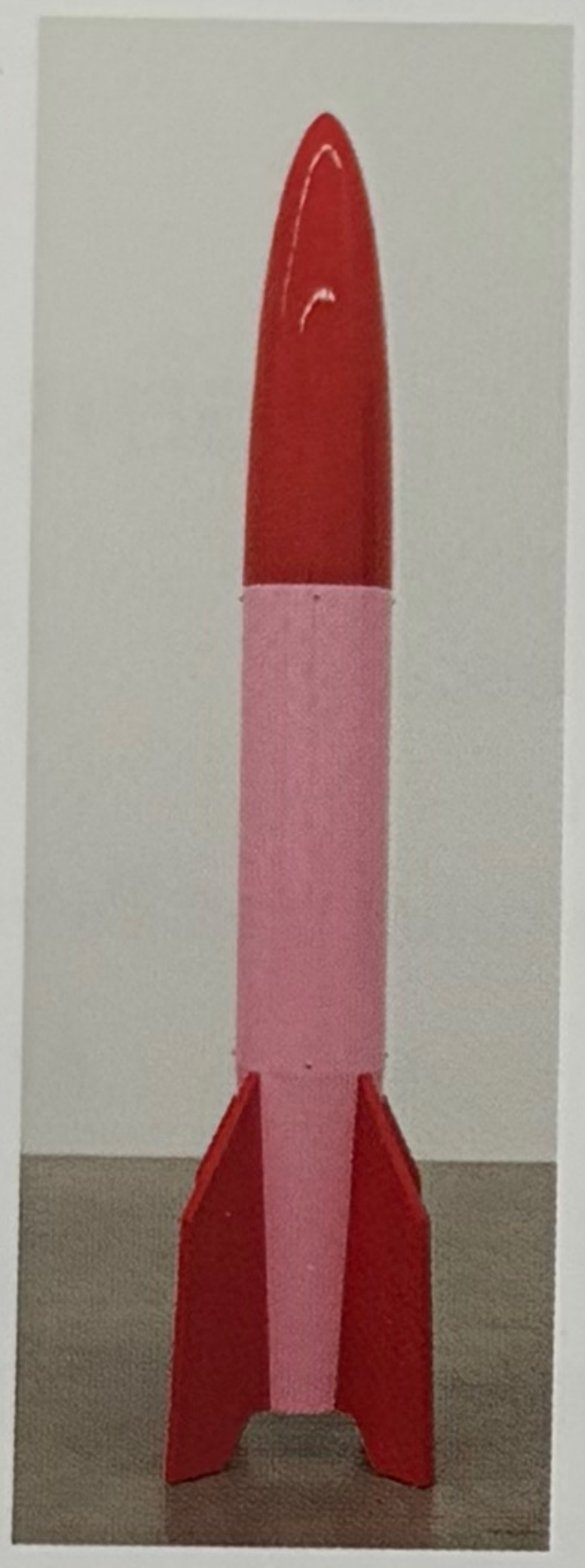
LOSER (LILAC RED VERSION), 2020
PVC, Stahl, Styropor, Epoxidharz, Lack
PVC, steel, styrofoam, epoxy resin, lacquer
220 × 56 × 56 cm
Privatsammlung / Private collection
49



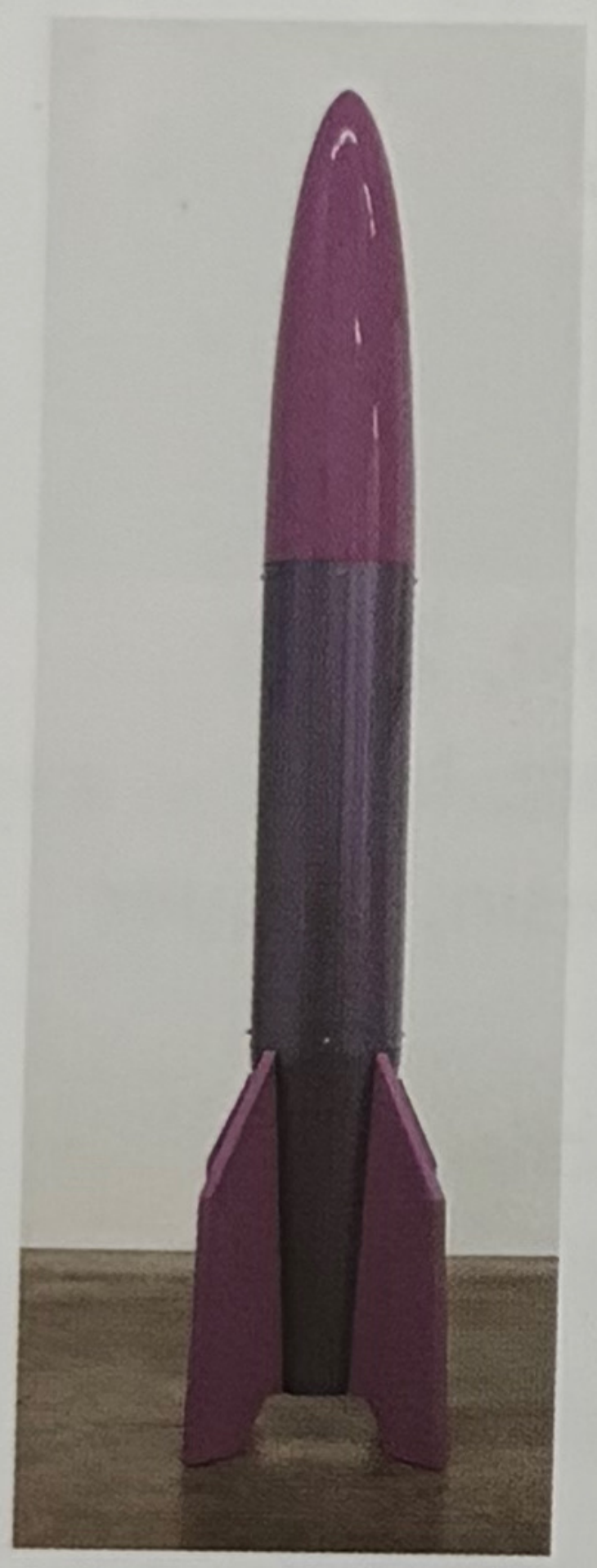
LOSER (PINK GREEN VERSION), 2020
PVC, Stahl, Styropor, Epoxidharz, Lack
PVC, steel, styrofoam, epoxy resin, lacquer
220 × 56 × 56 cm
Privatsammlung / Private collection
37



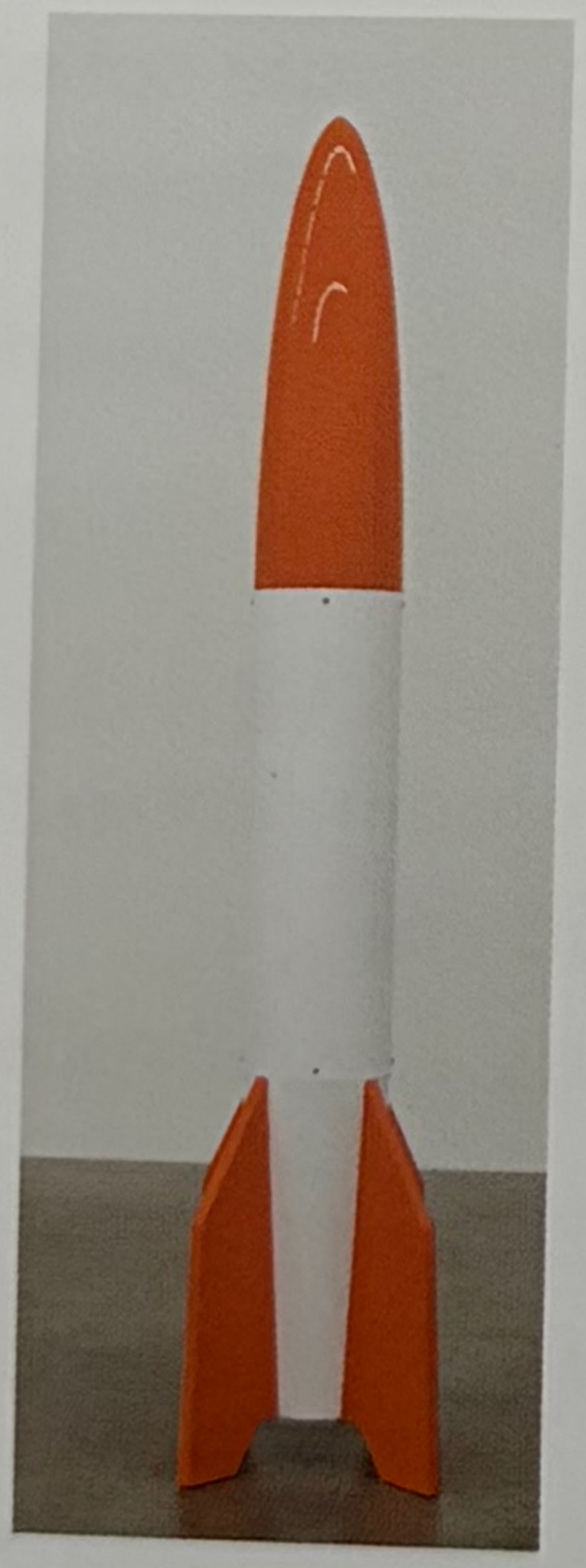
LOSER (PINK ORANGE VERSION), 2020
PVC, Stahl, Styropor, Epoxidharz, Lack
PVC, steel, styrofoam, epoxy resin, lacquer
220 × 56 × 56 cm
Privatsammlung / Private collection
41



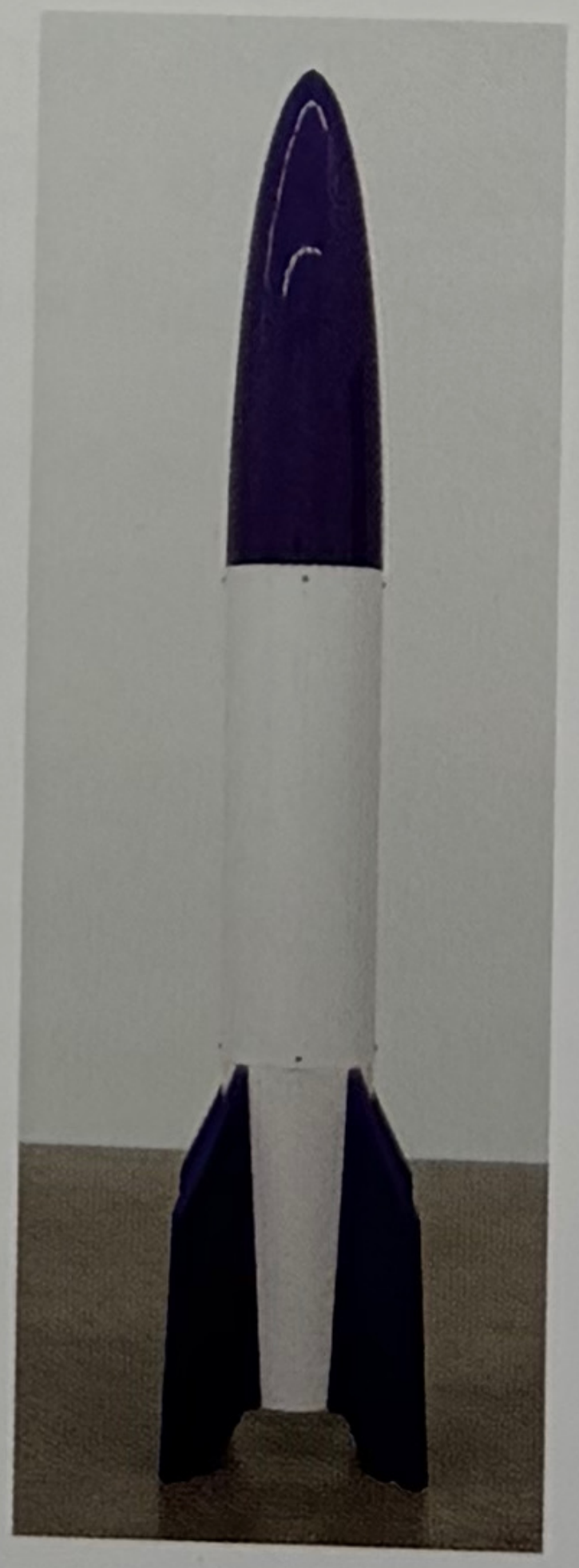
LOSER (PINK RED VERSION), 2020
PVC, Stahl, Styropor, Epoxidharz, Lack
PVC, steel, styrofoam, epoxy resin, lacquer
220 × 56 × 56 cm
Privatsammlung / Private collection, Berlin
35



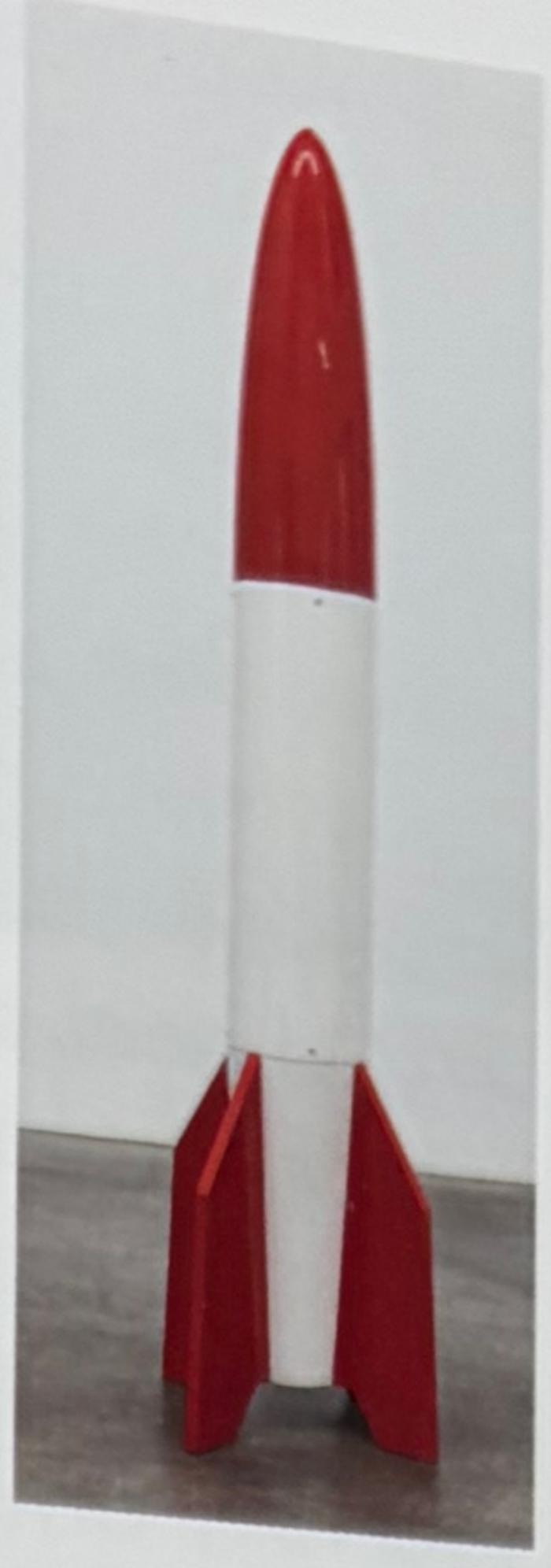
LOSER (VIOLET LILAC VERSION), 2021
PVC, Stahl, Styropor, Epoxidharz, Lack
PVC, steel, styrofoam, epoxy resin, lacquer
220 × 56 × 56 cm
Privatsammlung / Private collection, Berlin
43



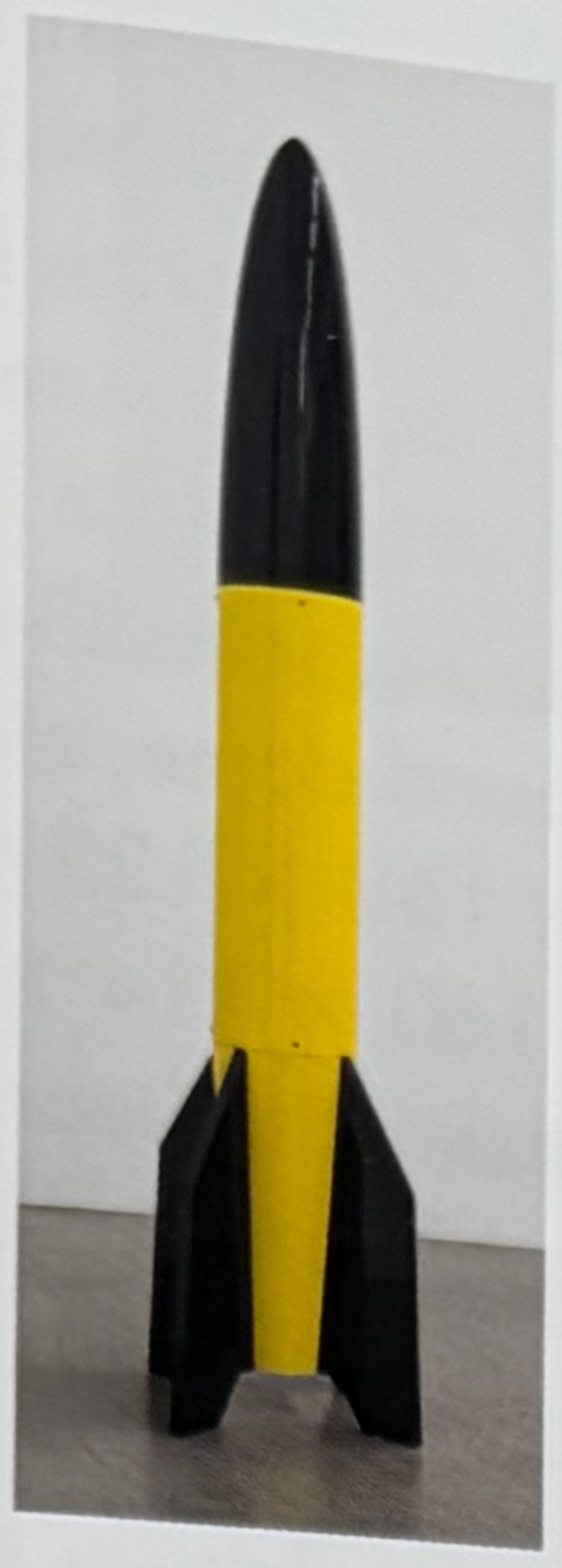
LOSER (WHITE ORANGE VERSION), 2020
PVC, Stahl, Styropor, Epoxidharz, Lack
PVC, steel, styrofoam, epoxy resin, lacquer
220 × 56 × 56 cm
Privatsammlung / Private collection
39



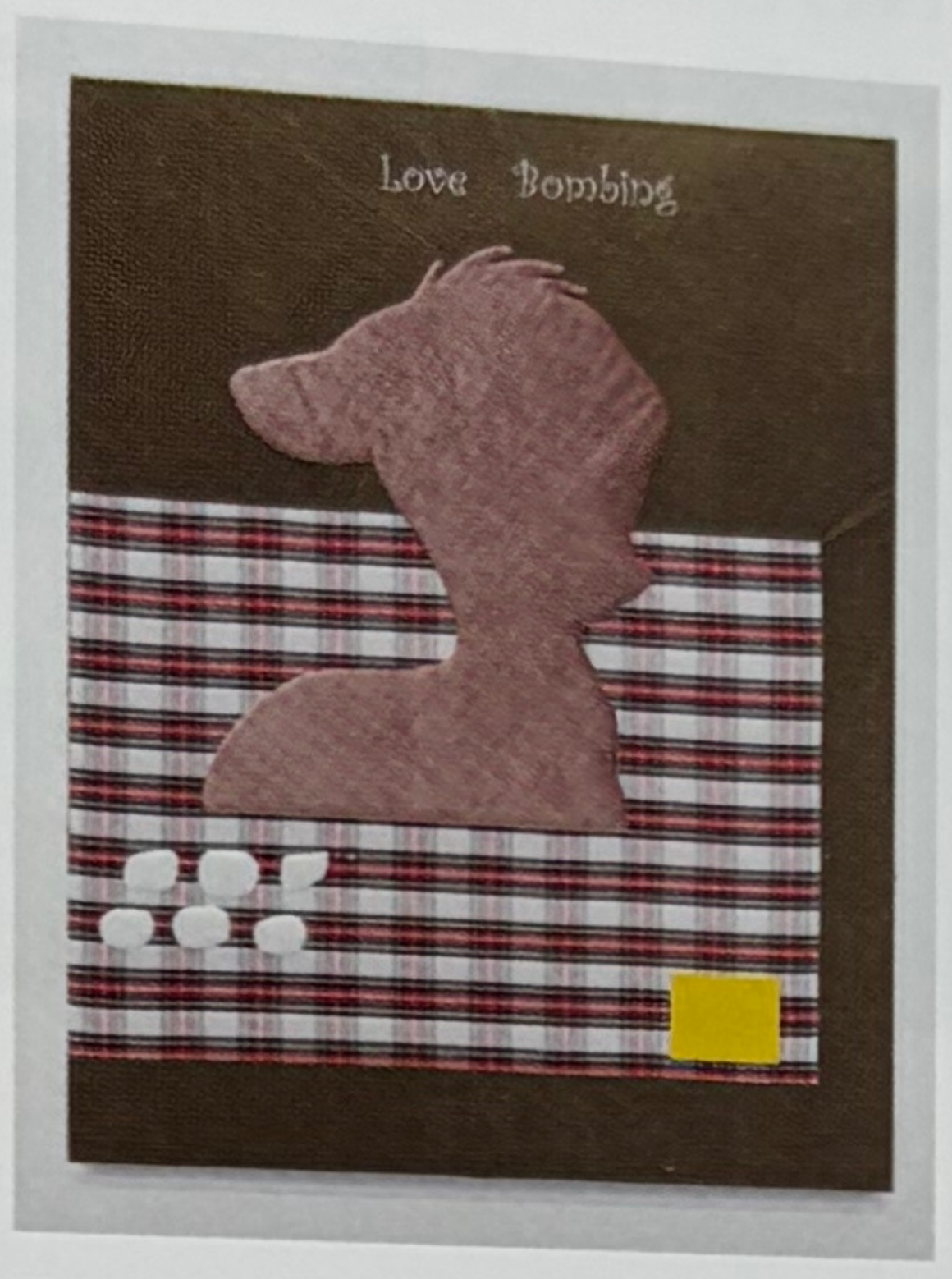
LOSER (WHITE PURPLE VERSION), 2020
PVC, Stahl, Styropor, Epoxidharz, Lack
PVC, steel, styrofoam, epoxy resin, lacquer
220 × 56 × 56 cm
Privatsammlung / Private collection
47



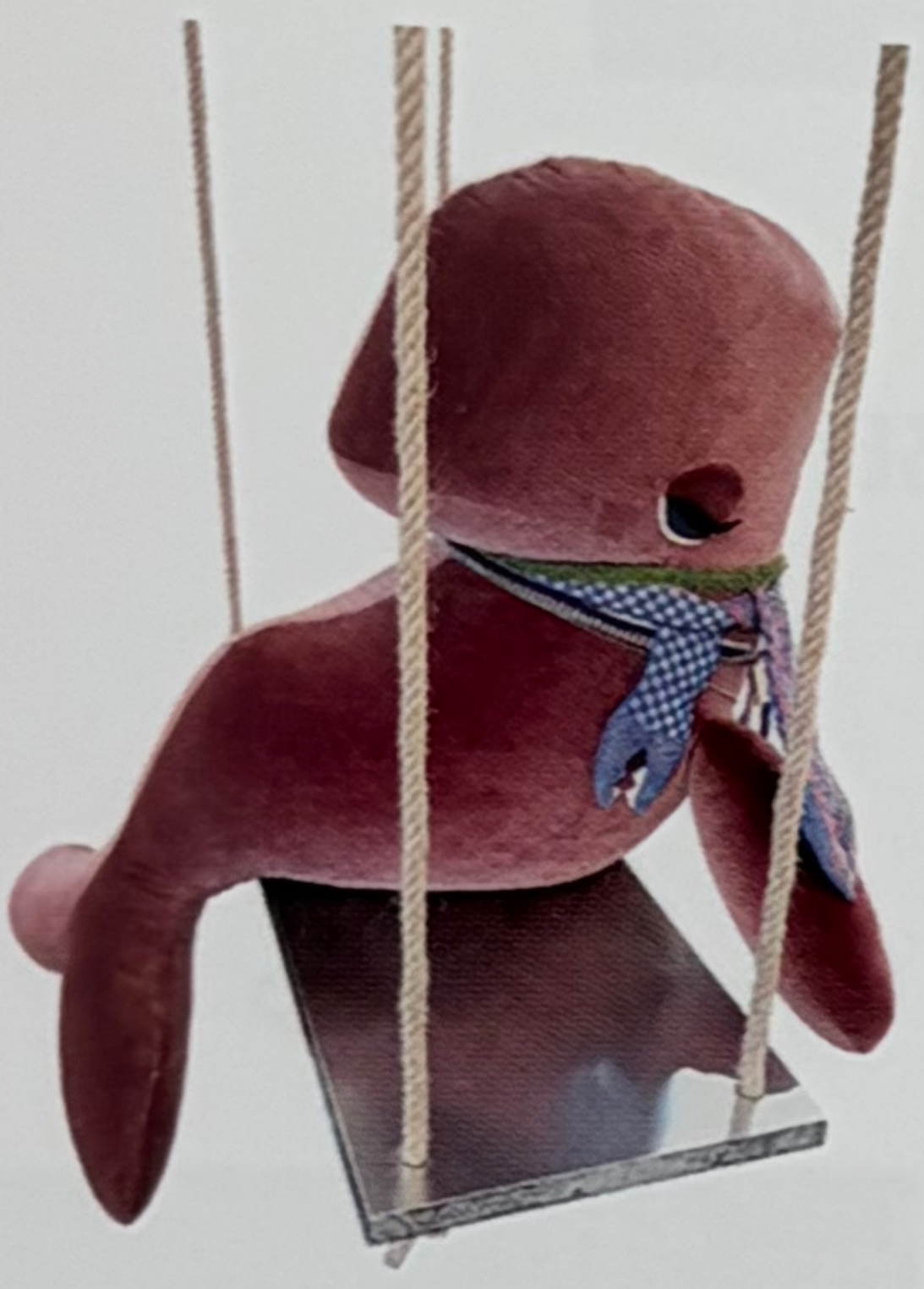
LOSER (WHITE RED VERSION), 2020
PVC, Stahl, Styropor, Epoxidharz, Lack
PVC, steel, styrofoam, epoxy resin, lacquer
220 × 56 × 56 cm
Privatsammlung / Private collection, Berlin
29



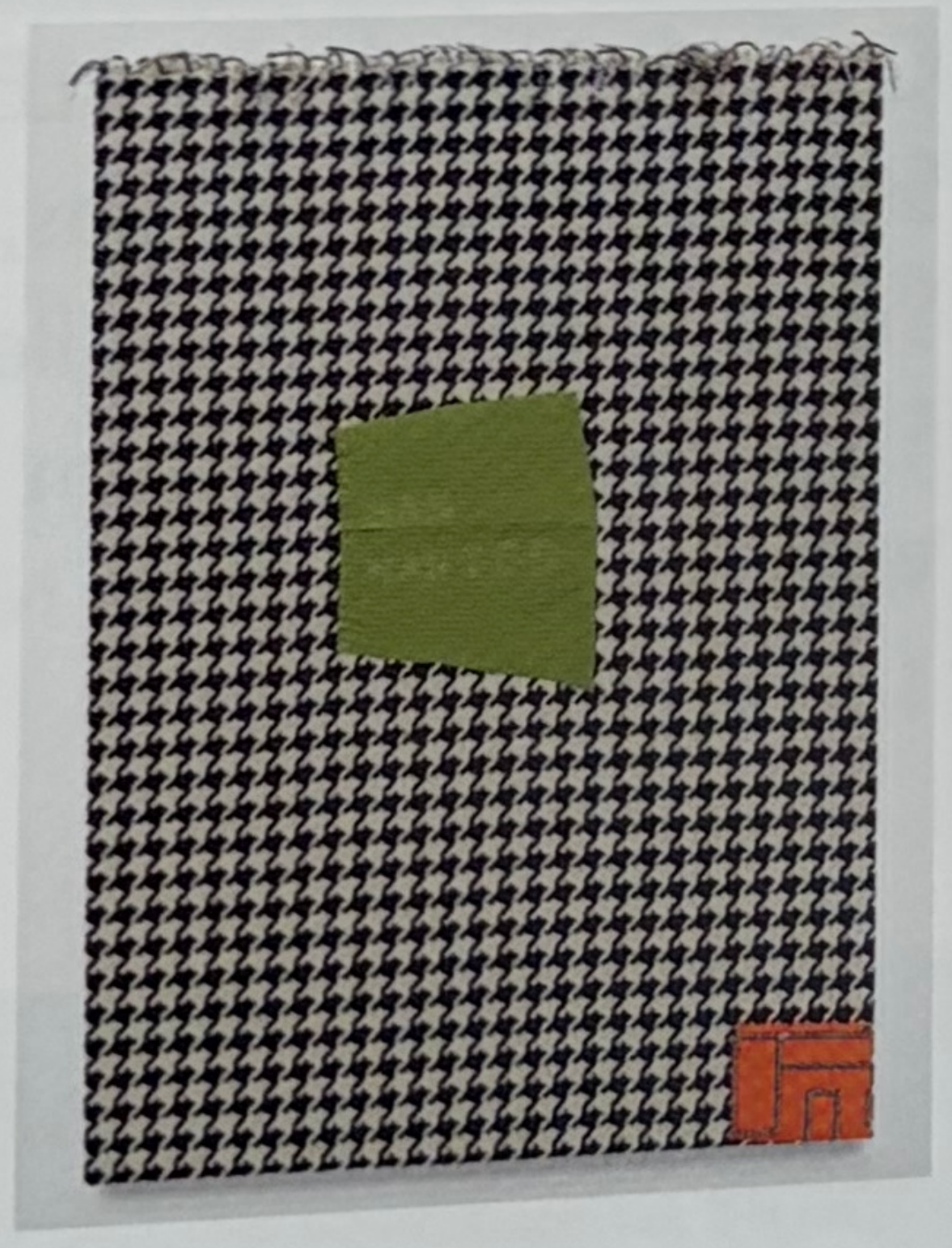
LOSER (YELLOW BLACK VERSION), 2021
PVC, Stahl, Styropor, Epoxidharz, Lack
PVC, steel, styrofoam, epoxy resin, lacquer
220 × 56 × 56 cm
Privatsammlung / Private collection, Berlin
33



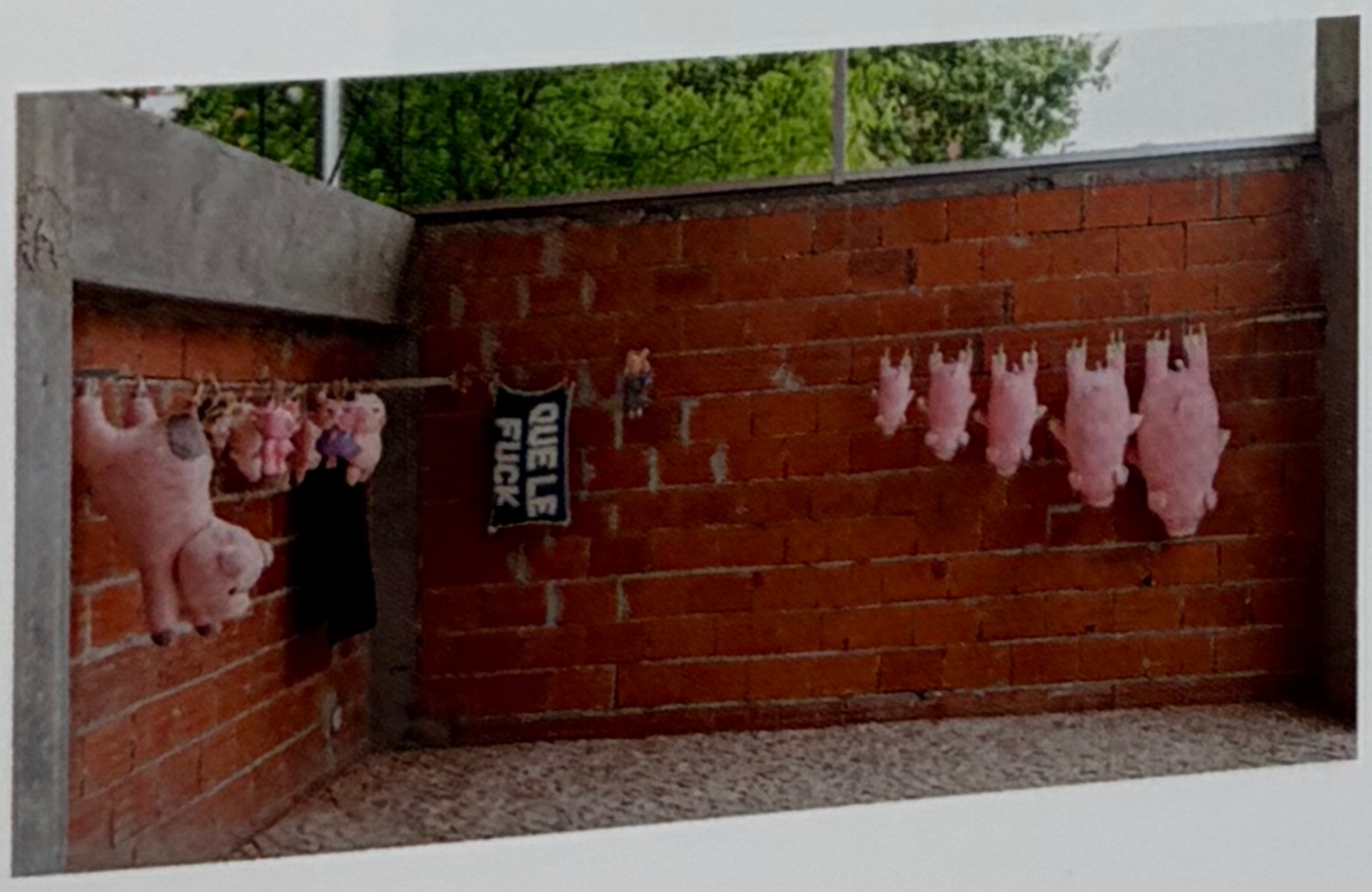
LOVE BOMBING, 2023
Heavy Cotton Drill, Seide, Wolle, Seidensamt, Vlies
Heavy cotton, silk, wool, silk velvet, fleece
192 × 150 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Petzel, New York
86



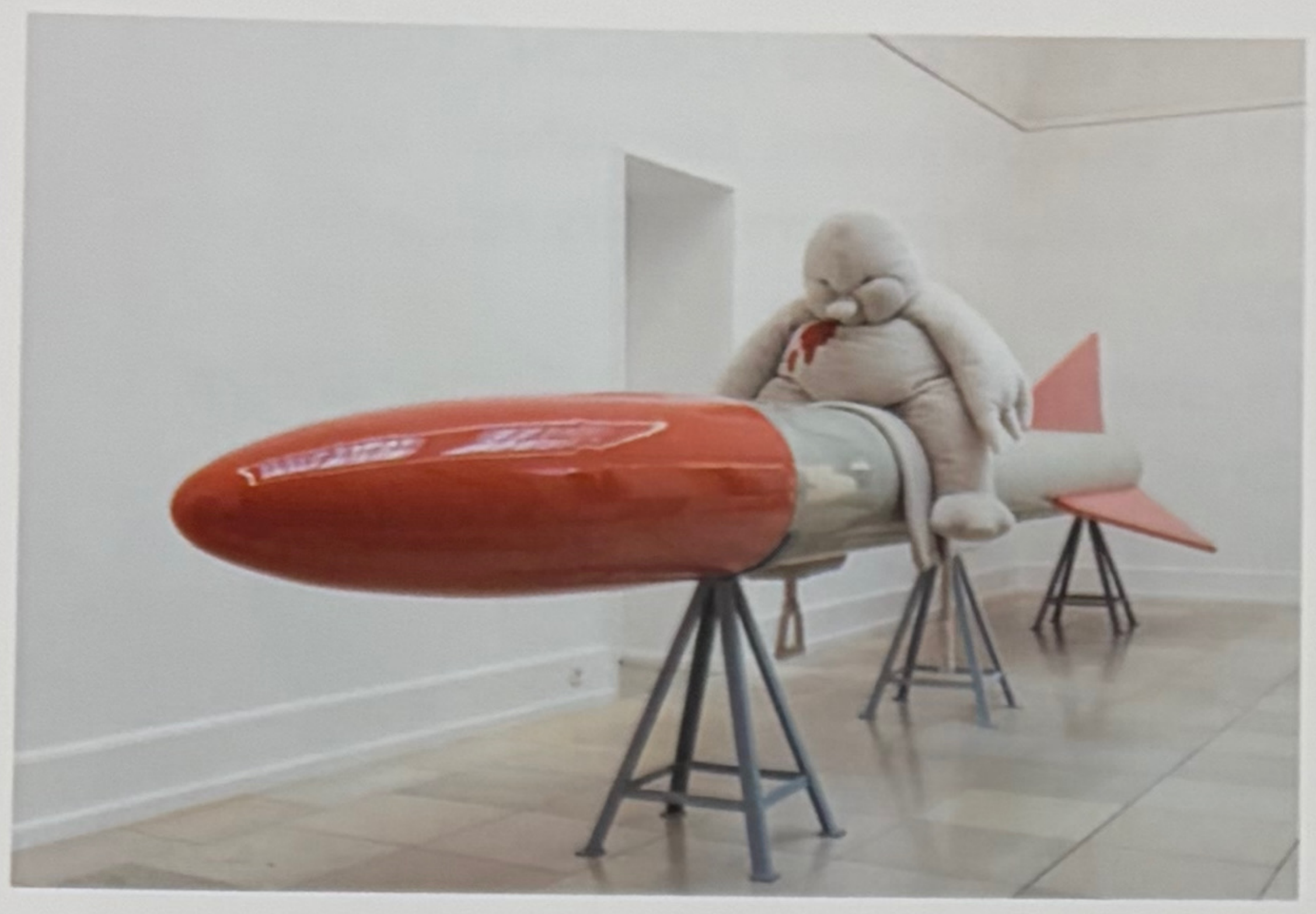
MAE DAY VII (DIRTY PINK VELVET WITH SILVER SWING VERSION), 2024
Samt, Vlies, Hanfseil, Holz, Lack, Accessoires
Velvet, fleece, hemp rope, wood, lacquer, accessories
Wal / Whale: 96 × 75 × 70 cm
Schaukel / Swing: 90 × 35 × 3 cm
Sammlung Meyring
152



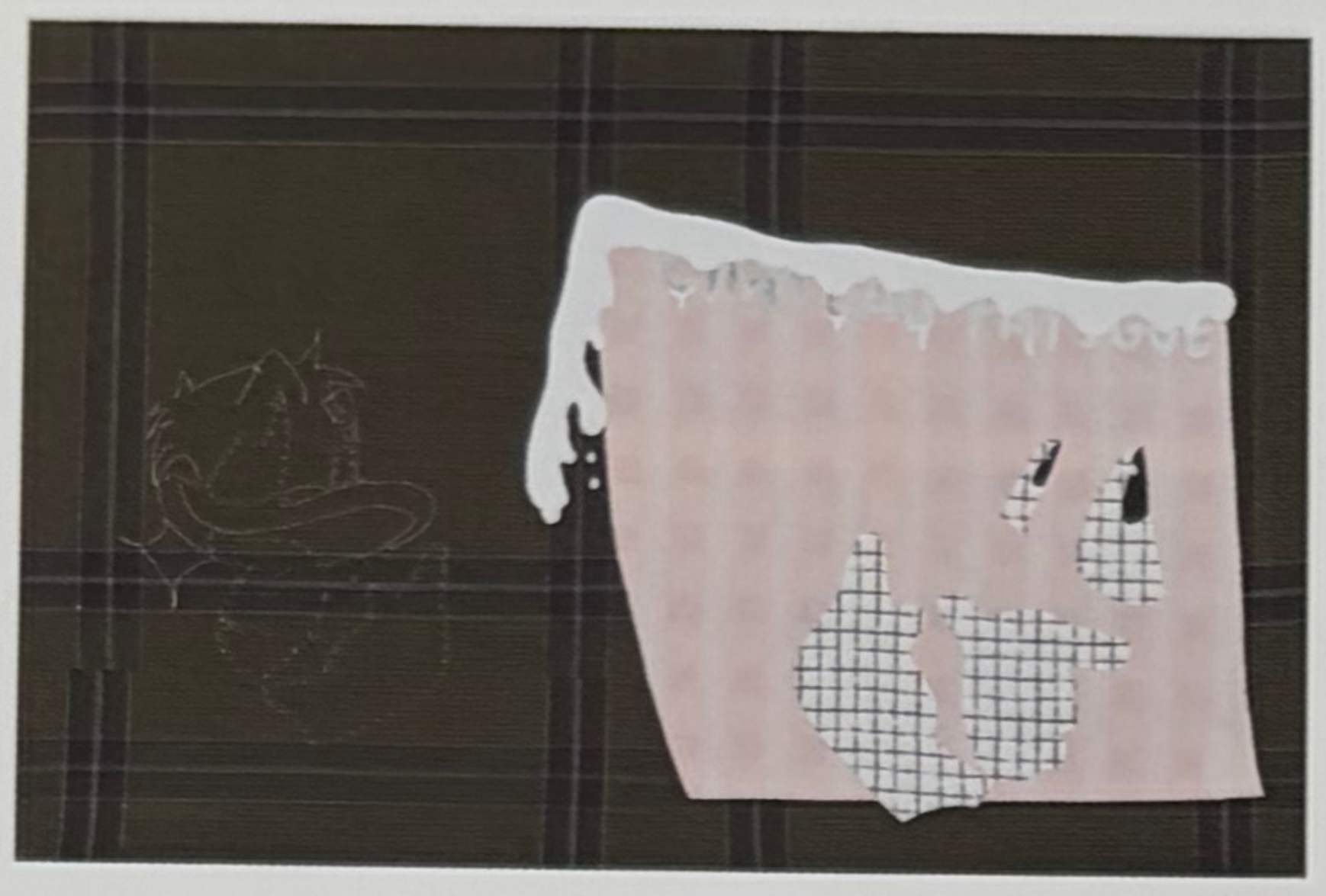
MAN WANTED, 2023
Wolle, Baumwolle, Vlies
Wool, cotton, fleece
187 × 135 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Petzel, New York
81



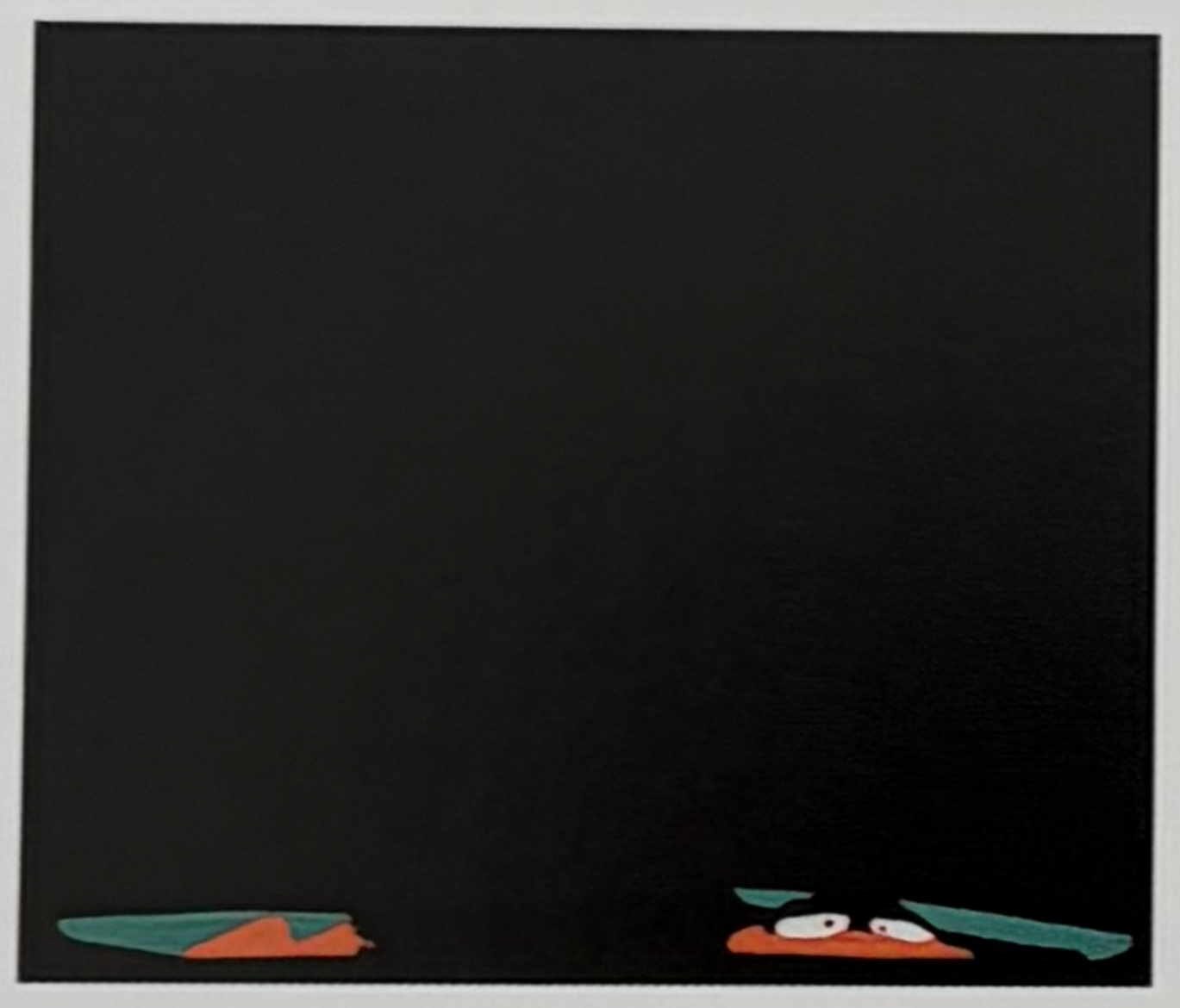
MARATHON, QUE LE FUCK VERSION, 2023
Stahl, Wäscheleine, Wäscheklammern, Stofftiere
Steel, clothesline, pegs, soft toys
Kissen von / Pillow by Livia von Bonin @dirtydirtypillows.com
Maße variabel / Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist and Gaga, Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Los Angeles
142/143



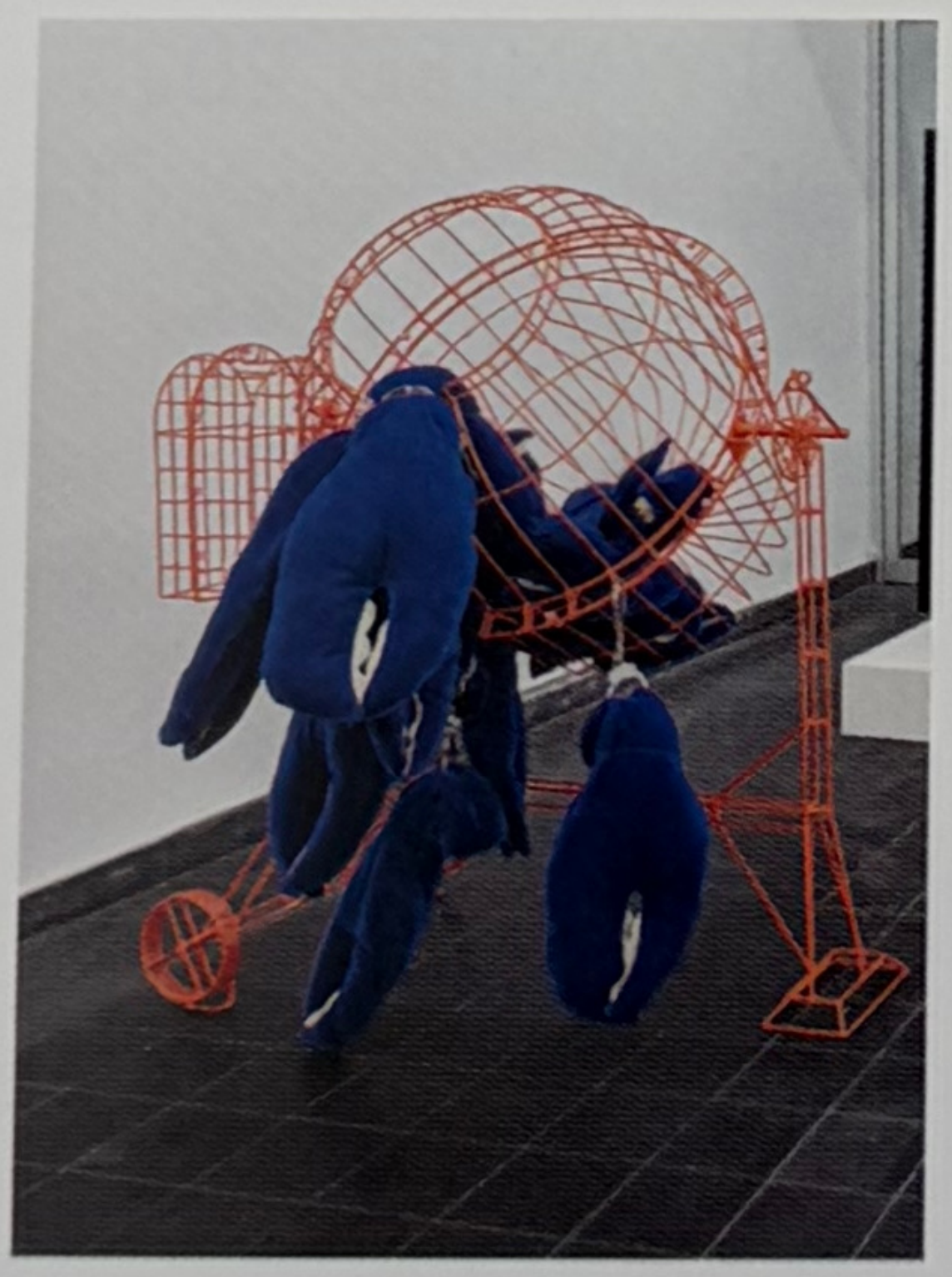
MISSY MISDEMEANOUR #2 (THE BEIGE VOMITING CHICK, MISS RILEY [LOOP #2, 2006], MORITZ VON OSWALD'S VOODOO BEAT & ROCKET BLAST BEAT), 2011
Rakete: PVC, Stahl, Polyester, Lack
Rocket: PVC, steel, polyester, lacquer
Küken: Mohair-Velours, Baumwolle, Vlies
Chick: mohair velour, cotton, fleece
DVD-Player, Soundglocke, Elektrokabel
DVD players, sound dome, electric cable
Rakete / Rocket: 162 × 132 × 900 cm
Küken / Chick: 160 × 114 × 120 cm
Sammlung Grässlin, St. Georgen
136/137, Umschlag / cover



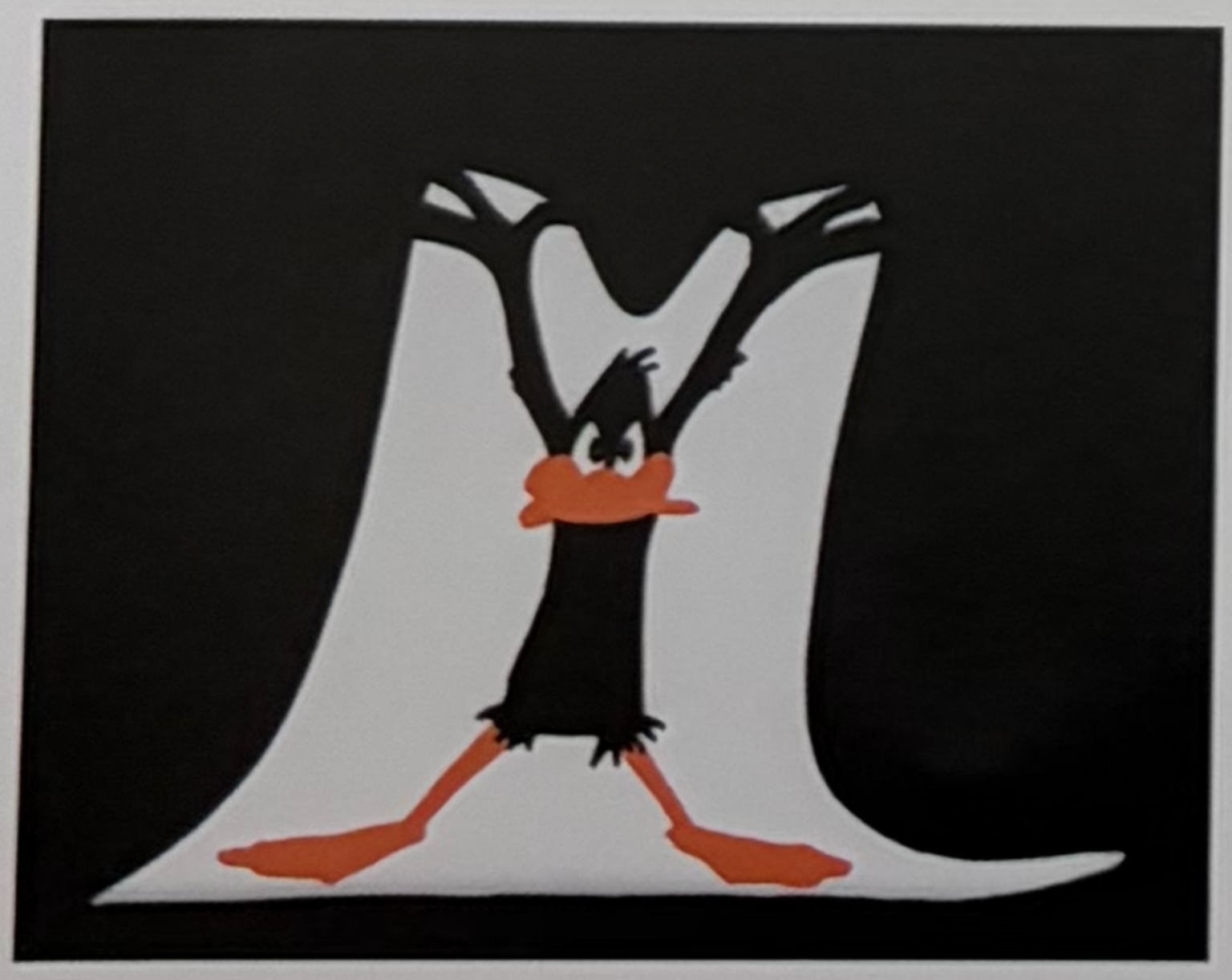
NOTHING #02 (CHÂTEAU FATIGUE), 2010
Wolle, Lack, Baumwolle
Wool, lacquer, cotton
194 × 295 cm
Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main,
Eigentum des / property of Städelschen Museums-Vereins e. V.
Erworben 2012 als Schenkung von / Acquired in 2012
as a gift from Girls Only
76/77



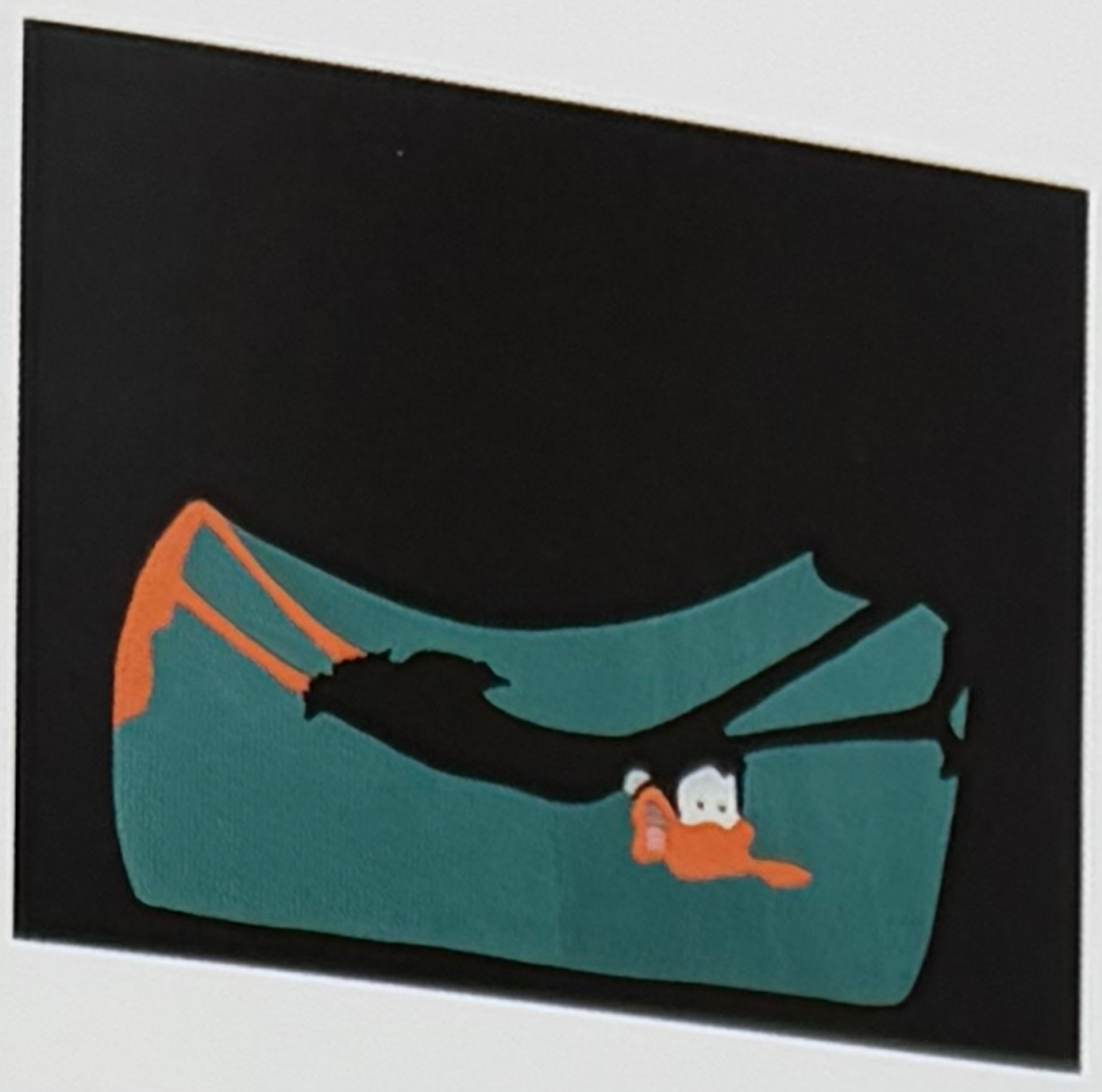
OPEN YOUR SHIRT PLEASE 1, 2019
Samt, Baumwolle, Vlies
Velvet, cotton, fleece
155 × 185 cm
The Collection of Eleanor Heyman Propp
25



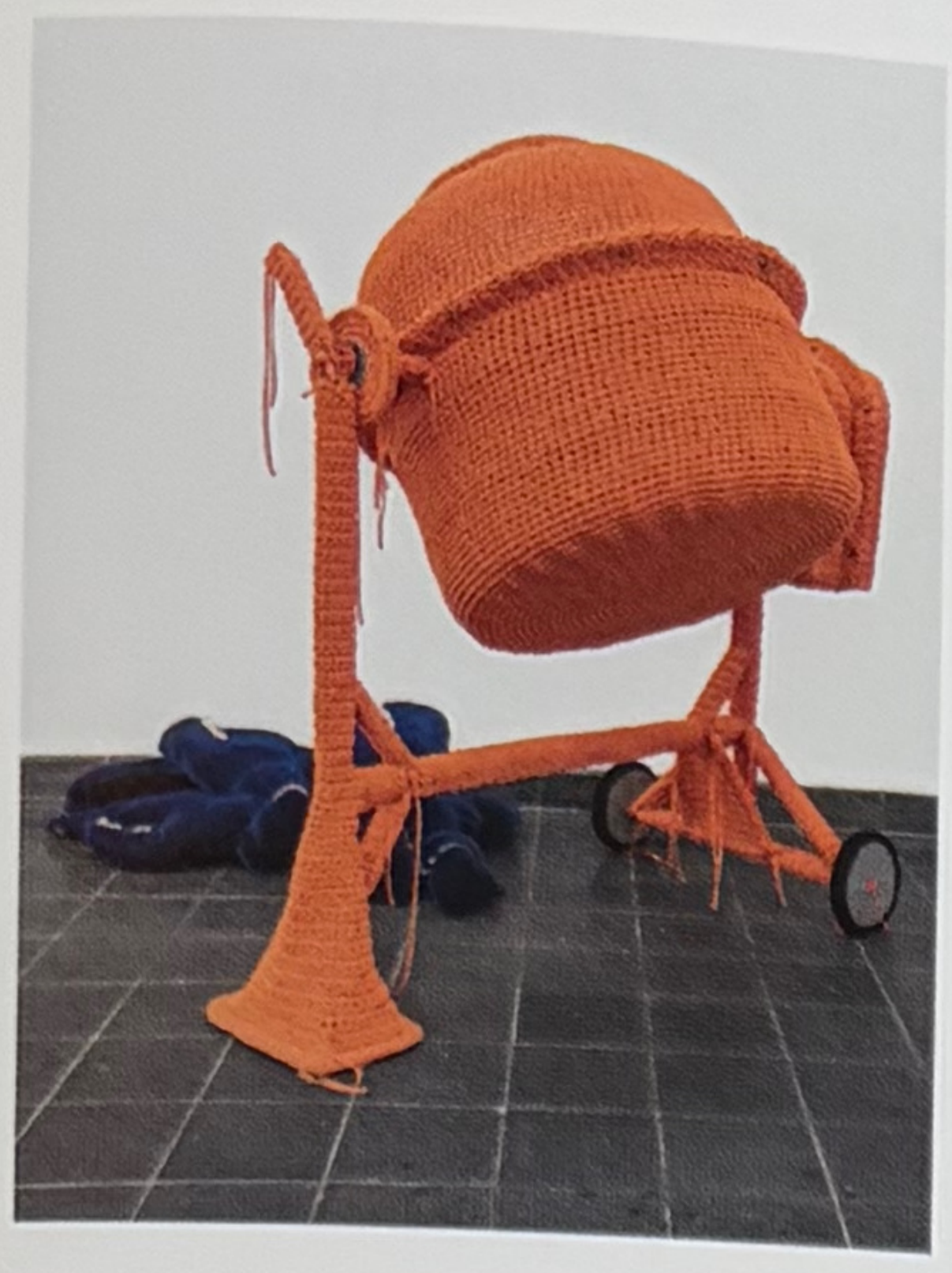
OPEN YOUR SHIRT PLEASE 2, 2019
Stahl, Lack, Samt, Vlies, Handschellen
Steel, lacquer, velvet, fleece, handcuffs
142 × 140 × 110 cm
Valeria and Gregorio Napoleone Collection
1



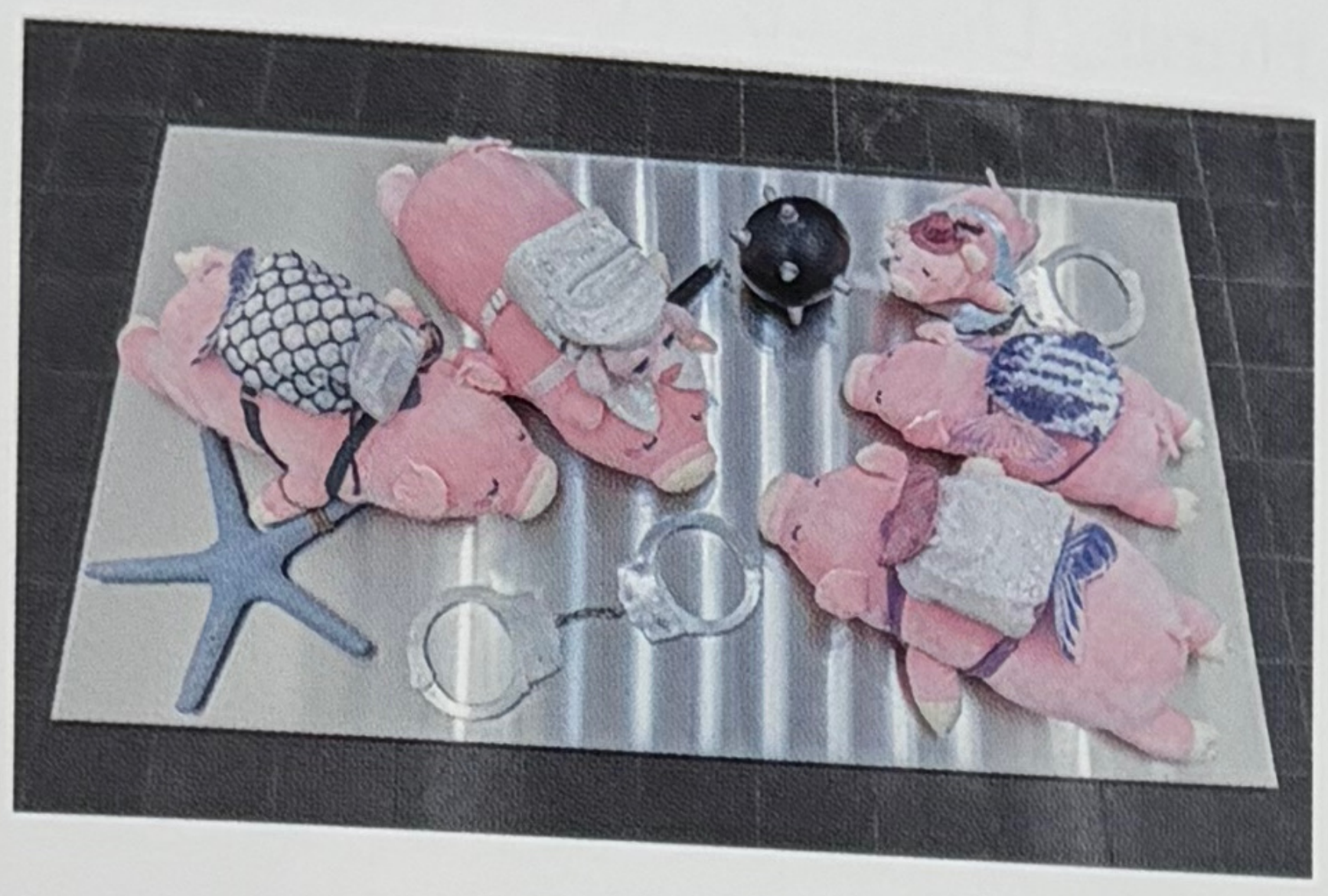
OPEN YOUR SHIRT PLEASE 3, 2019
Samt, Baumwolle, Vlies
Velvet, cotton, fleece
155 × 185 cm
Valeria and Gregorio Napoleone Collection
5



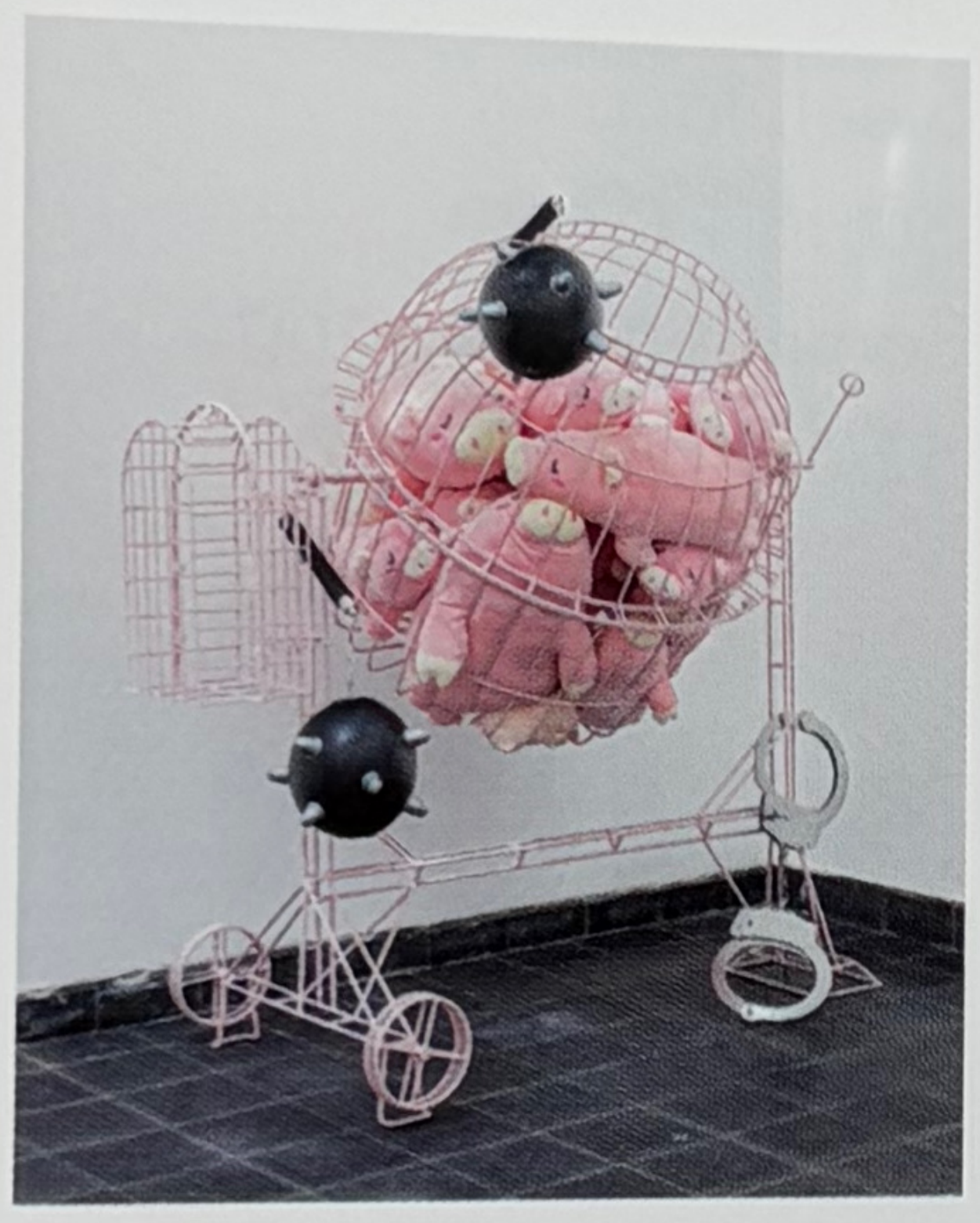
OPEN YOUR SHIRT PLEASE 4, 2019
Samt, Baumwolle, Vlies
Velvet, cotton, fleece
155 × 185 cm
Collection of Eleanor and Bobby Cayre, New York
9



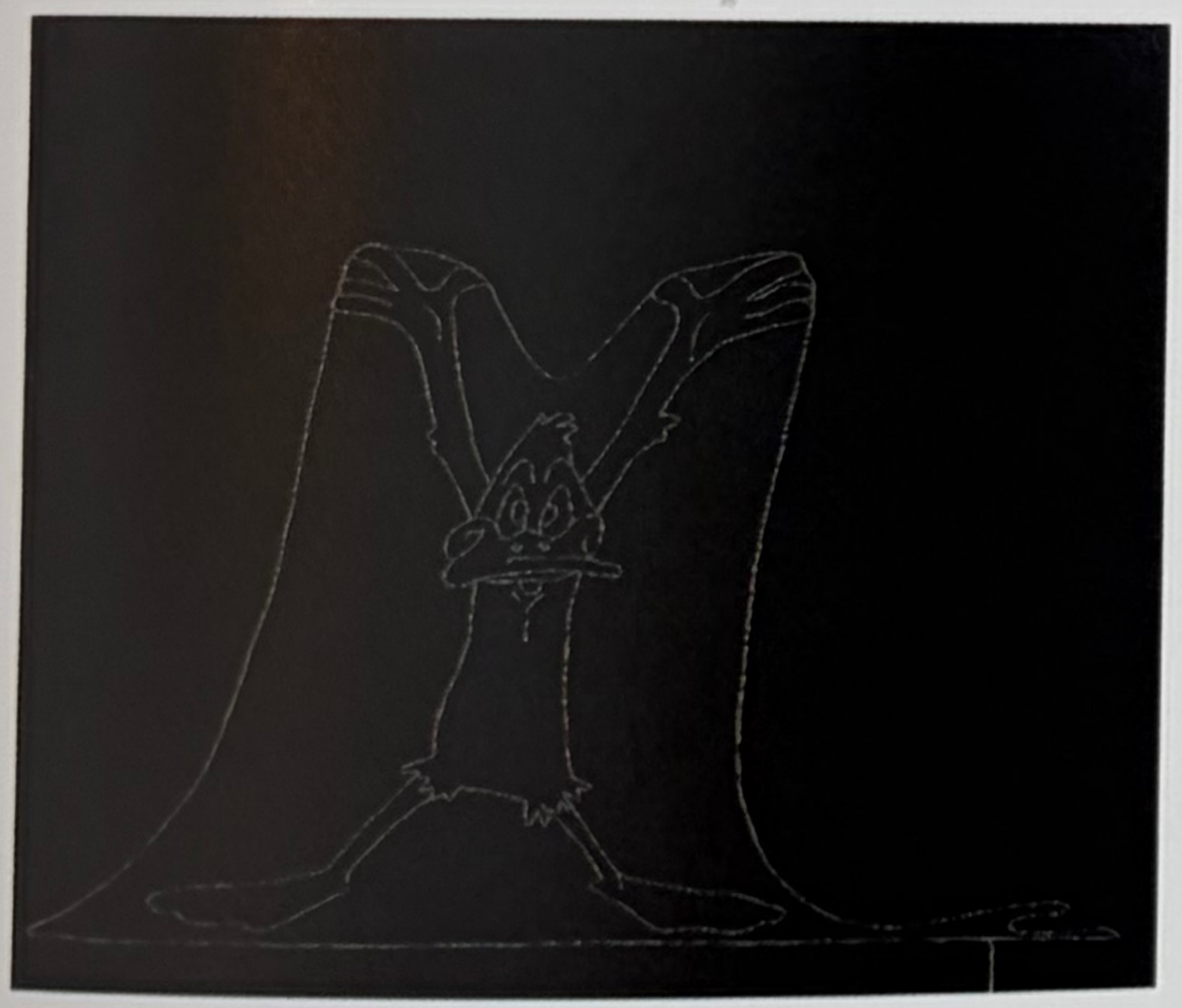
OPEN YOUR SHIRT PLEASE 5, 2019
Stahl, Lack, Häkelarbeit, Vlies, Samt, Handschellen
Steel, lacquer, crochet, fleece, velvet, handcuffs
148 × 141 × 86 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Gaga, Mexico City,
Guadalajara, and Los Angeles
10



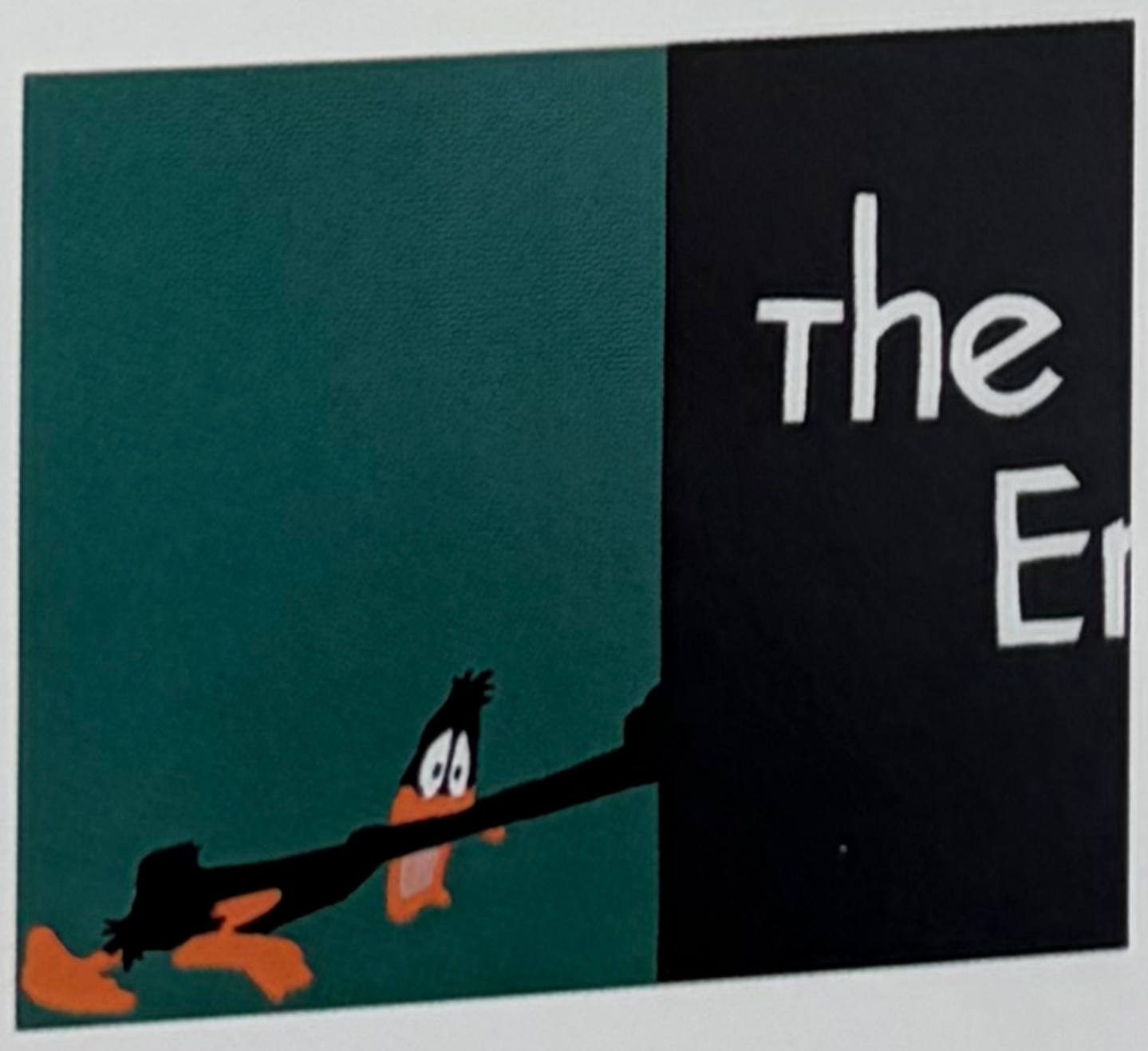
OPEN YOUR SHIRT PLEASE 6, 2019
Stahl, Kunststoff, Stofftiere, Handschellen
Steel, plastic, soft toys, handcuffs
40 × 210 × 120 cm
Courtesy of the Perić Collection
16/17



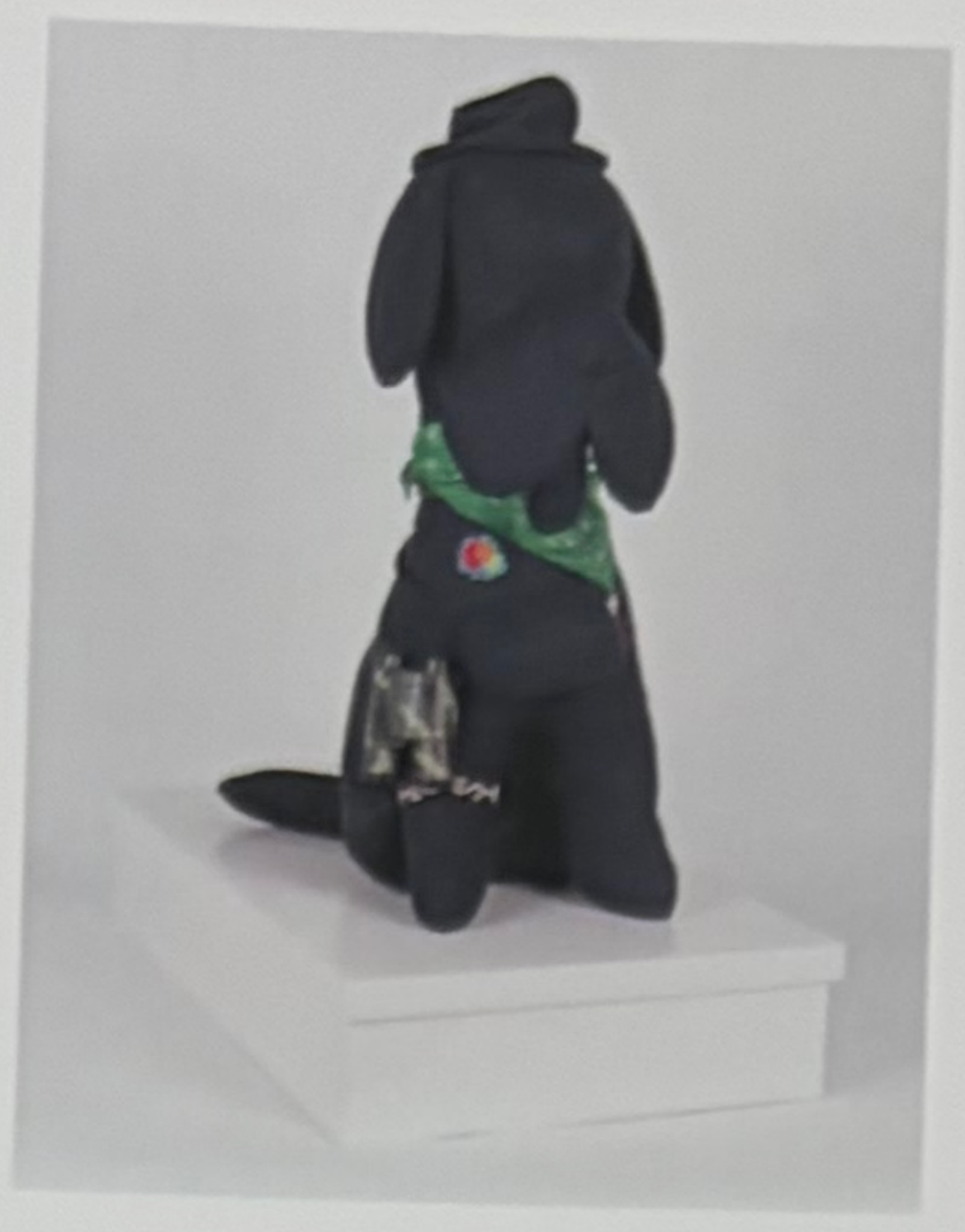
OPEN YOUR SHIRT PLEASE 7, 2019
Stahl, Lack, Kunststoff, Stofftiere, Handschellen
Steel, lacquer, plastic, soft toys, handcuffs
143 × 140 × 100 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Gaga, Mexico City,
Guadalajara, and Los Angeles
23



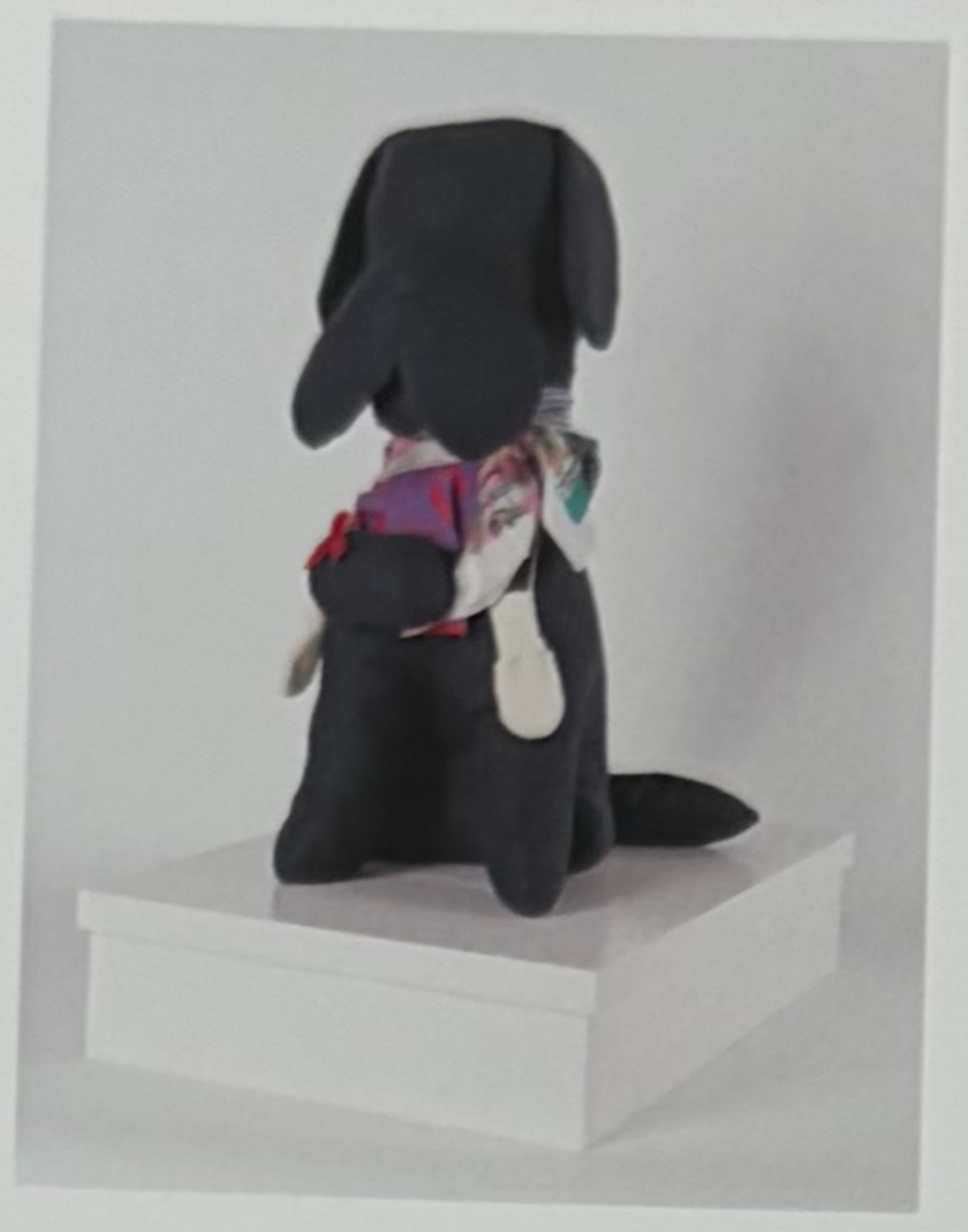
OPEN YOUR SHIRT PLEASE 8, 2019
Samt, Baumwolle, Vlies
Velvet, cotton, fleece
155 × 185 cm
Gabriela Cámara Collection
22



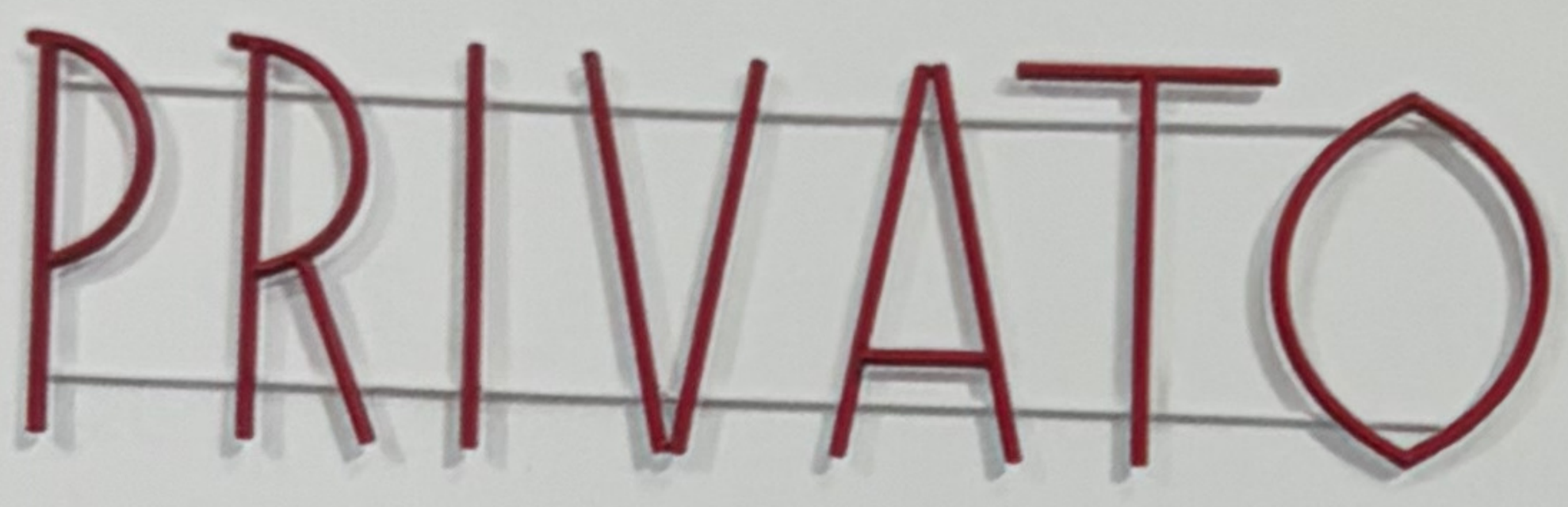
OPEN YOUR SHIRT PLEASE 9, 2019
Samt, Baumwolle, Vlies
Velvet, cotton, fleece
155 × 185 cm
Collection Julien Wolf, Paris
26



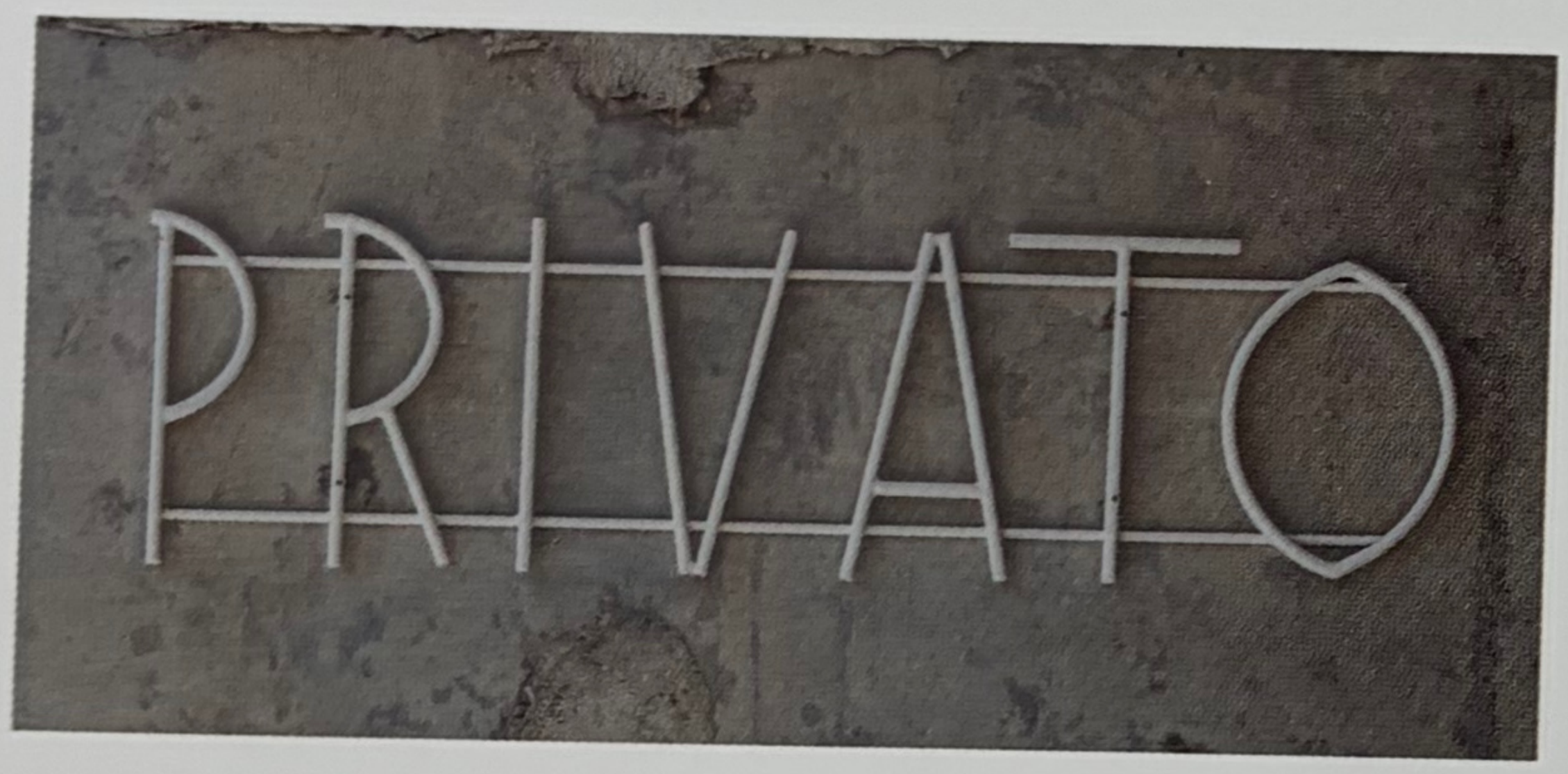
PETIT SAINT BERNARD AVEC BOX, 2016
Hund: Wolle, Baumwollvlies, Seide, Kunststoff, Applikationen
Dog: wool, cotton fleece, silk, plastic, appliqués
Schachtel: Holz, Lack / Box: wood, lacquer
Hund / Dog: 85 × 32 × 68 cm
Schachtel / Box: 16 × 52 × 82 cm
Edition 12/13 + IV, Einzelstücke / each unique
Privatsammlung / Private collection
126, 127



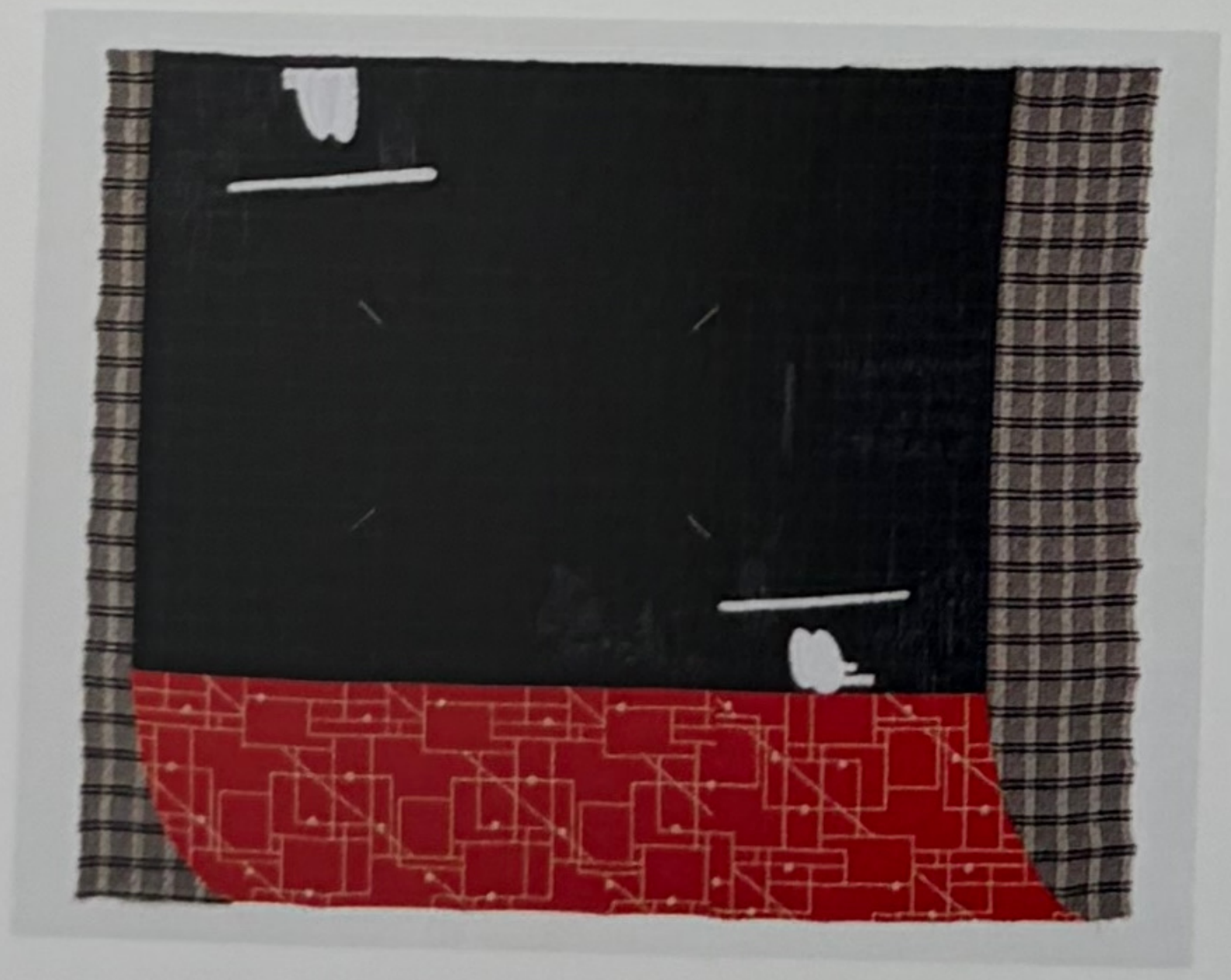
PETIT SAINT BERNARD AVEC BOX
(LINEN EYEPATCH VERSION), 2016
Hund: Leinen, Baumwollvlies, Baumwolle, Seide, Applikationen
Dog: linen, cotton fleece, cotton, silk, appliqués
Schachtel: Holz, Lack / Box: wood, lacquer
Hund / Dog: ca. 76 × 32 × 59 cm
Schachtel / Box: 16 × 52 × 82 cm
Edition 13 + IV, Einzelstücke / each unique
Privatsammlung / Private collection, Frankfurt am Main
125



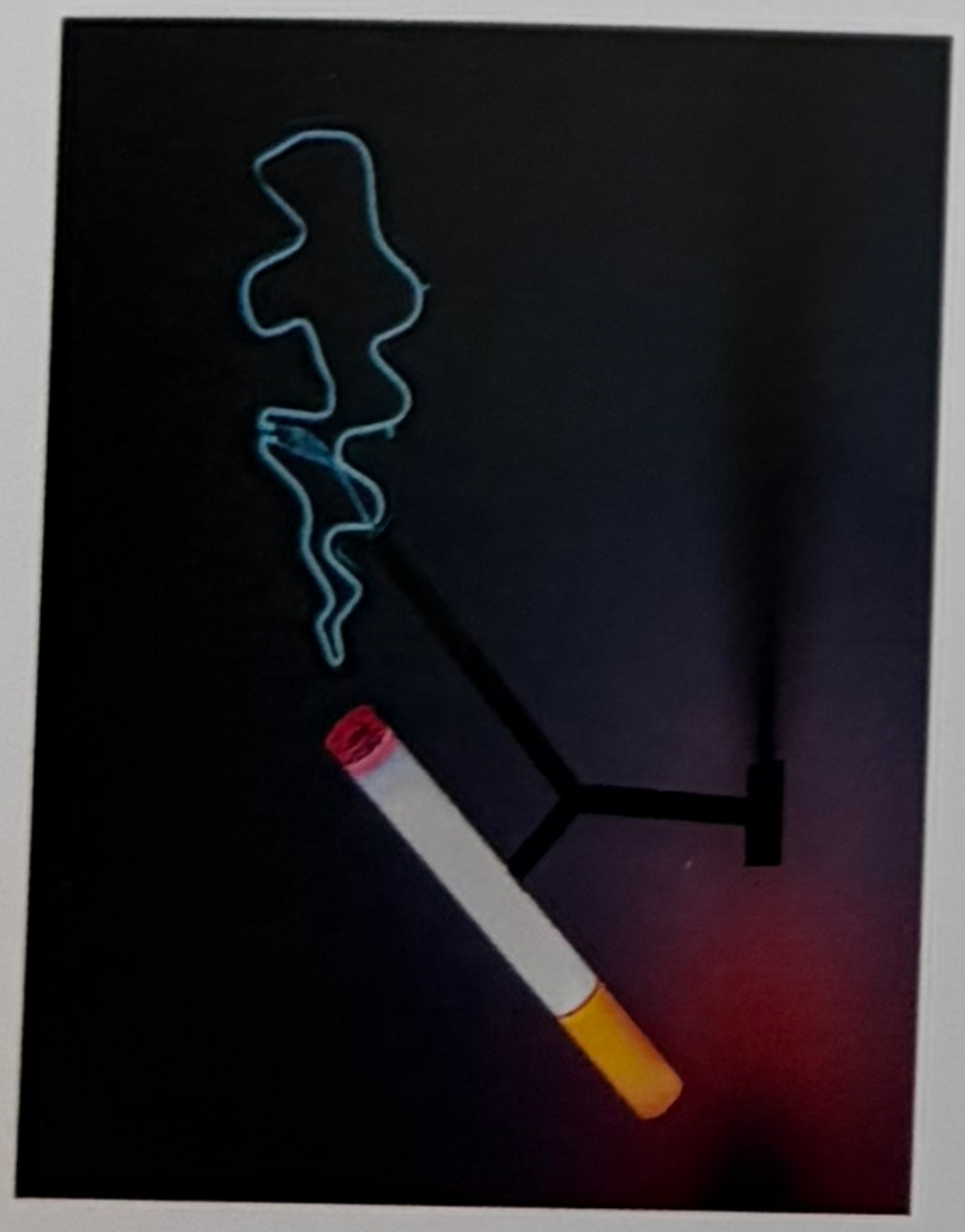
PRIVATO, 2010
Stahl, Lack
Steel, lacquer
30 × 110 cm
Sammlung Meyring
52/53



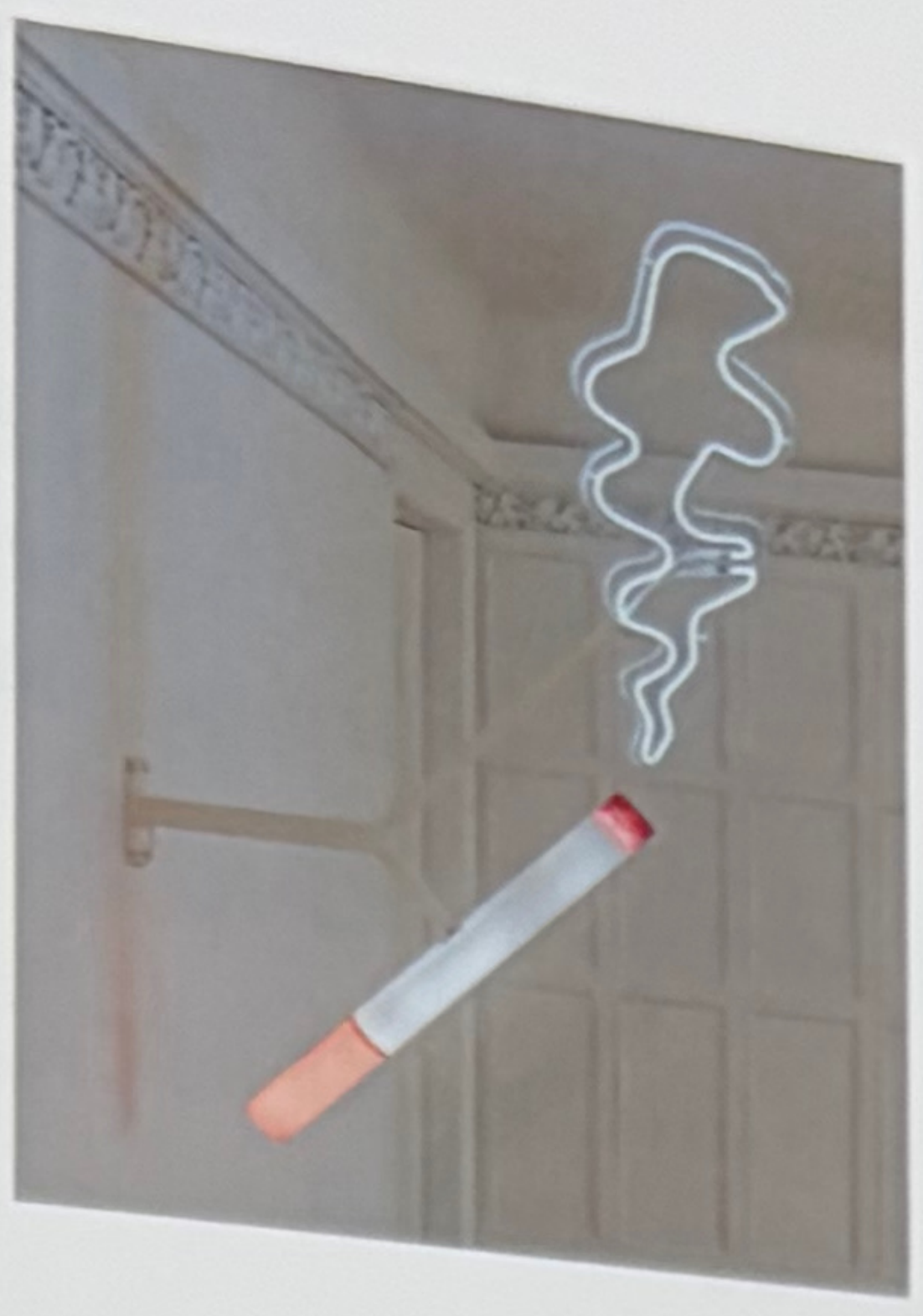
PRIVATO, 2010
Stahl, Lack
Steel, lacquer
30 × 110 cm
Sammlung Meyring
151



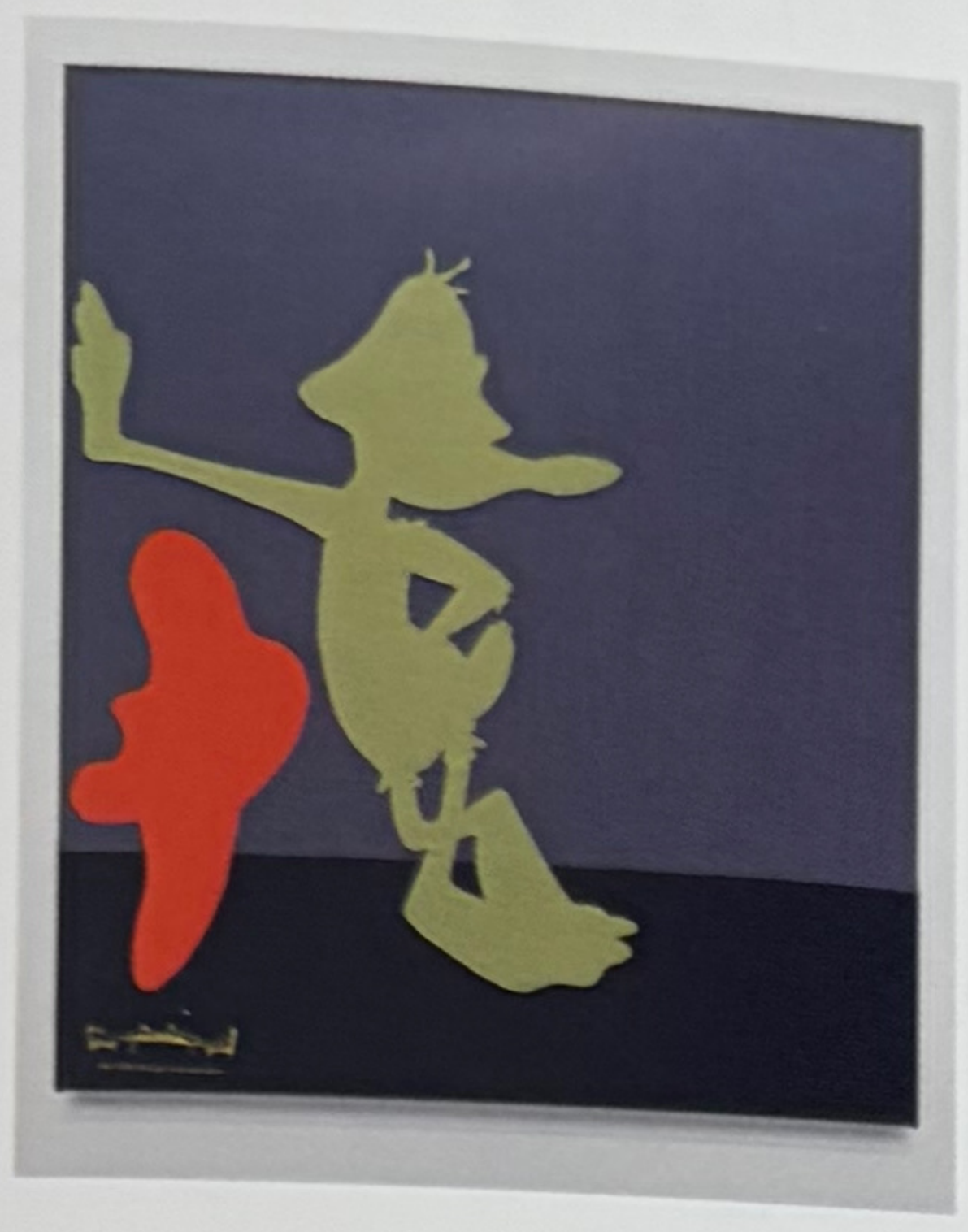
SHIRT / FLUFF / SAME DAY, 2007
Baumwolle, Wolle, Loden
Cotton, wool, loden
282 × 365 cm
Privatsammlung / Private collection, Rheinland
74/75



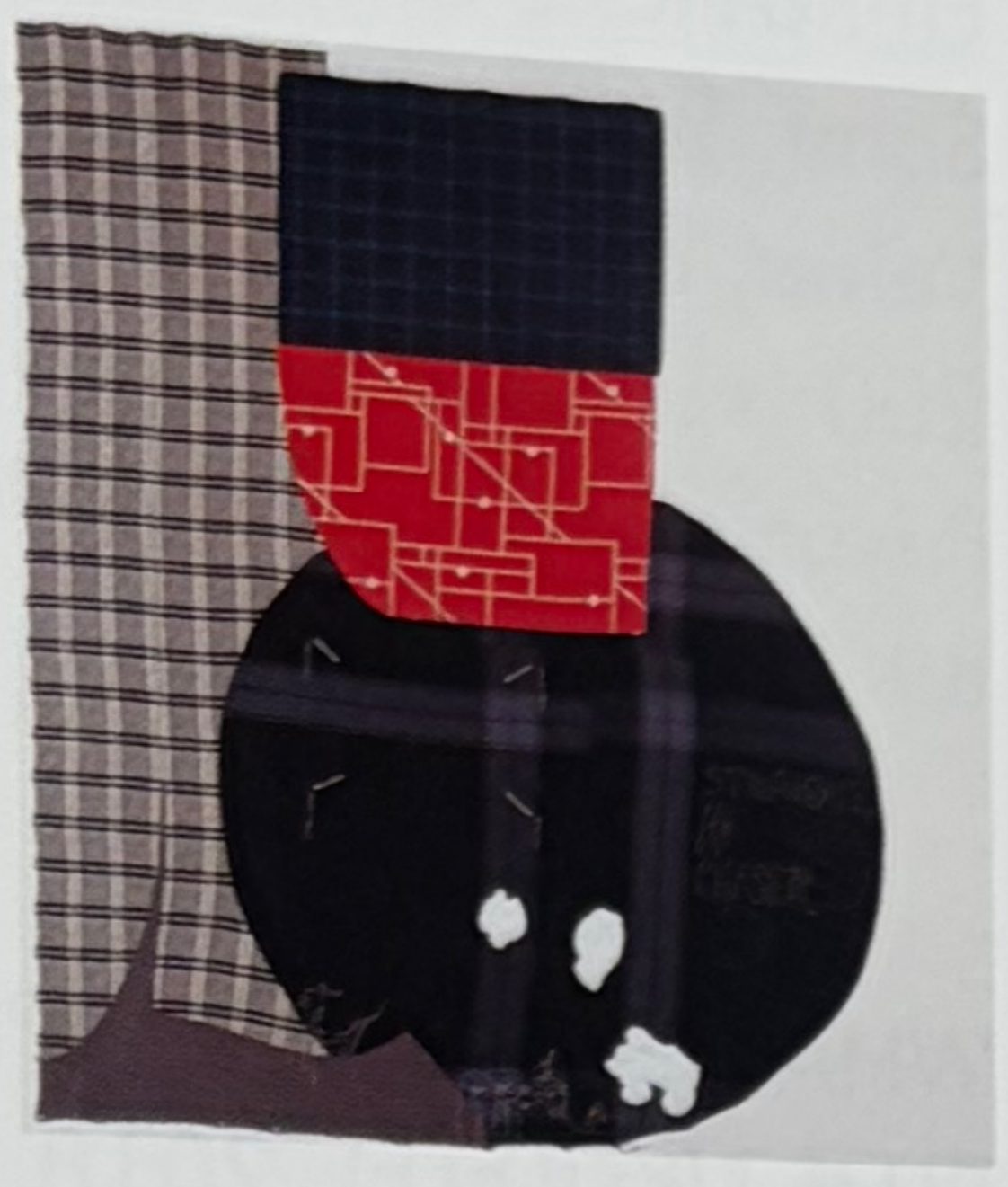
SMOKE (BLACK), 2020
Stahl, Acryl, LED, elektronischer Transformator, Neon
Steel, acrylic, LED, electronic transformer, neon
137 × 73 × 9 cm
Edition 9/25
Privatsammlung / Private collection
102



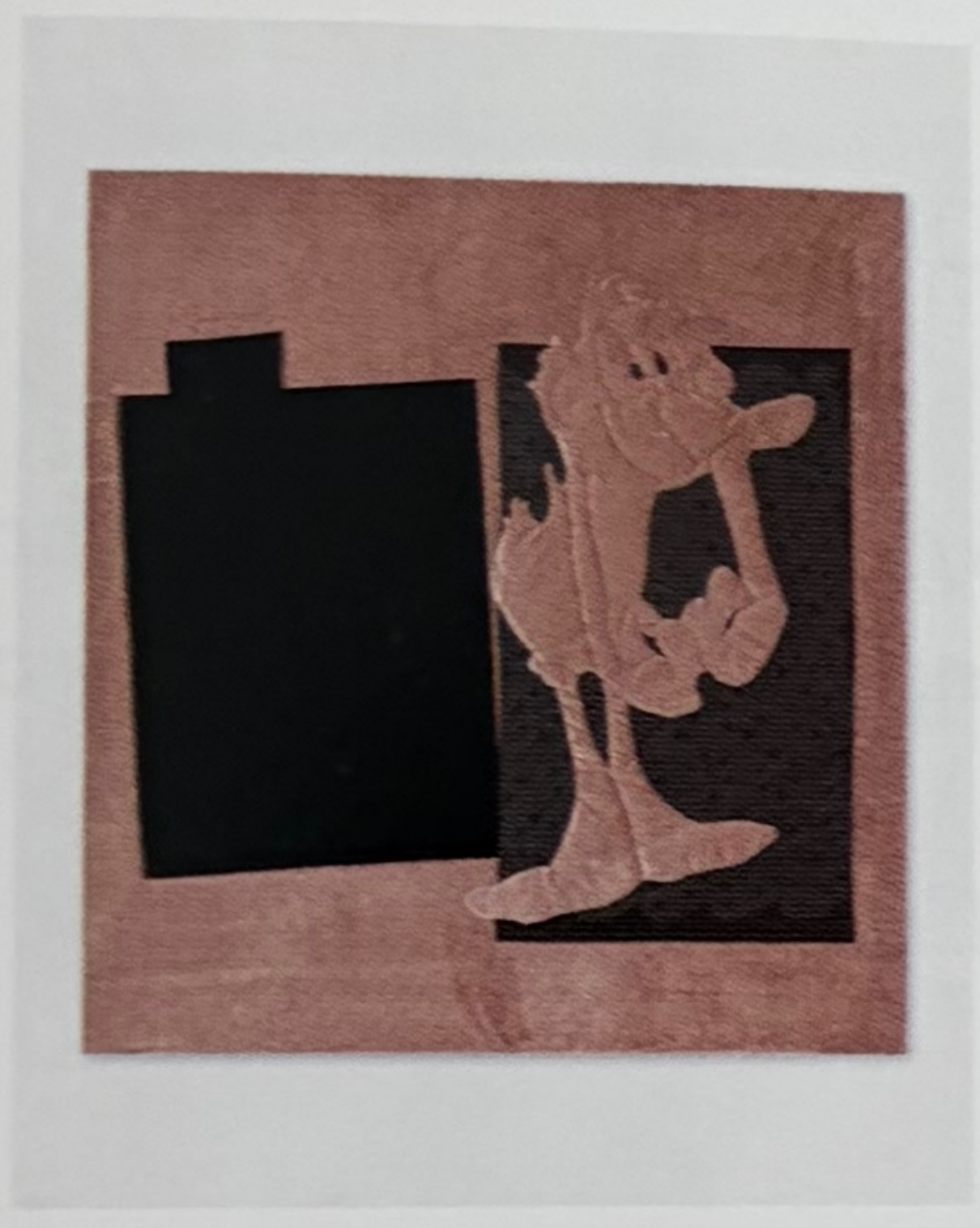
SMOKE (WHITE), 2008
Stahl, Acryl, LED, elektronischer Transformator, Neon
Steel, acrylic, LED, electronic transformer, neon
153 × 63 × 9 cm
Edition 23/25
Galerie Neu, Berlin
104



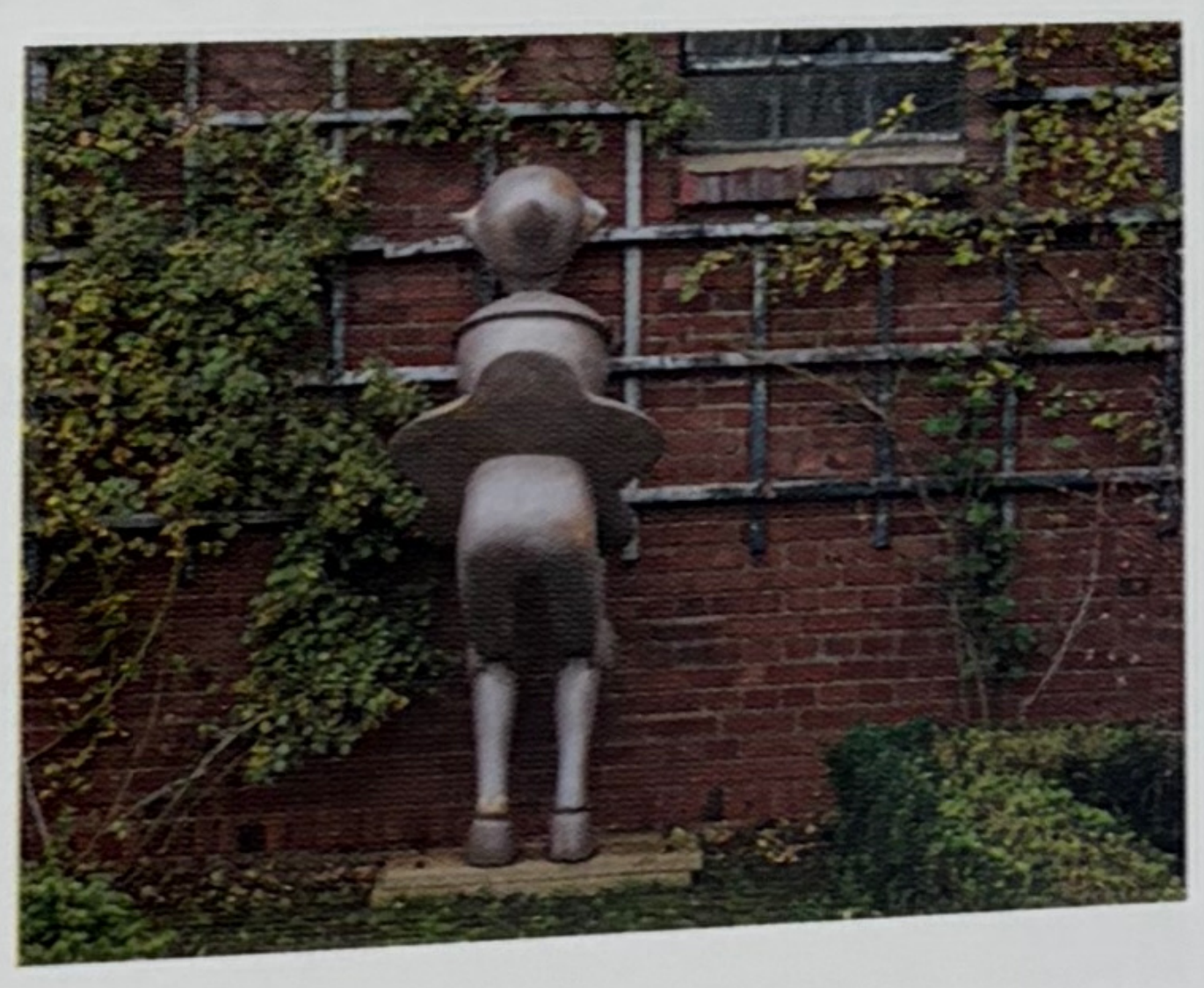
SOCIAL CLIMBER, 2023
Wolle, Baumwolle, Vlies
Wool, cotton, fleece
197 × 160 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Petzel, New York
167



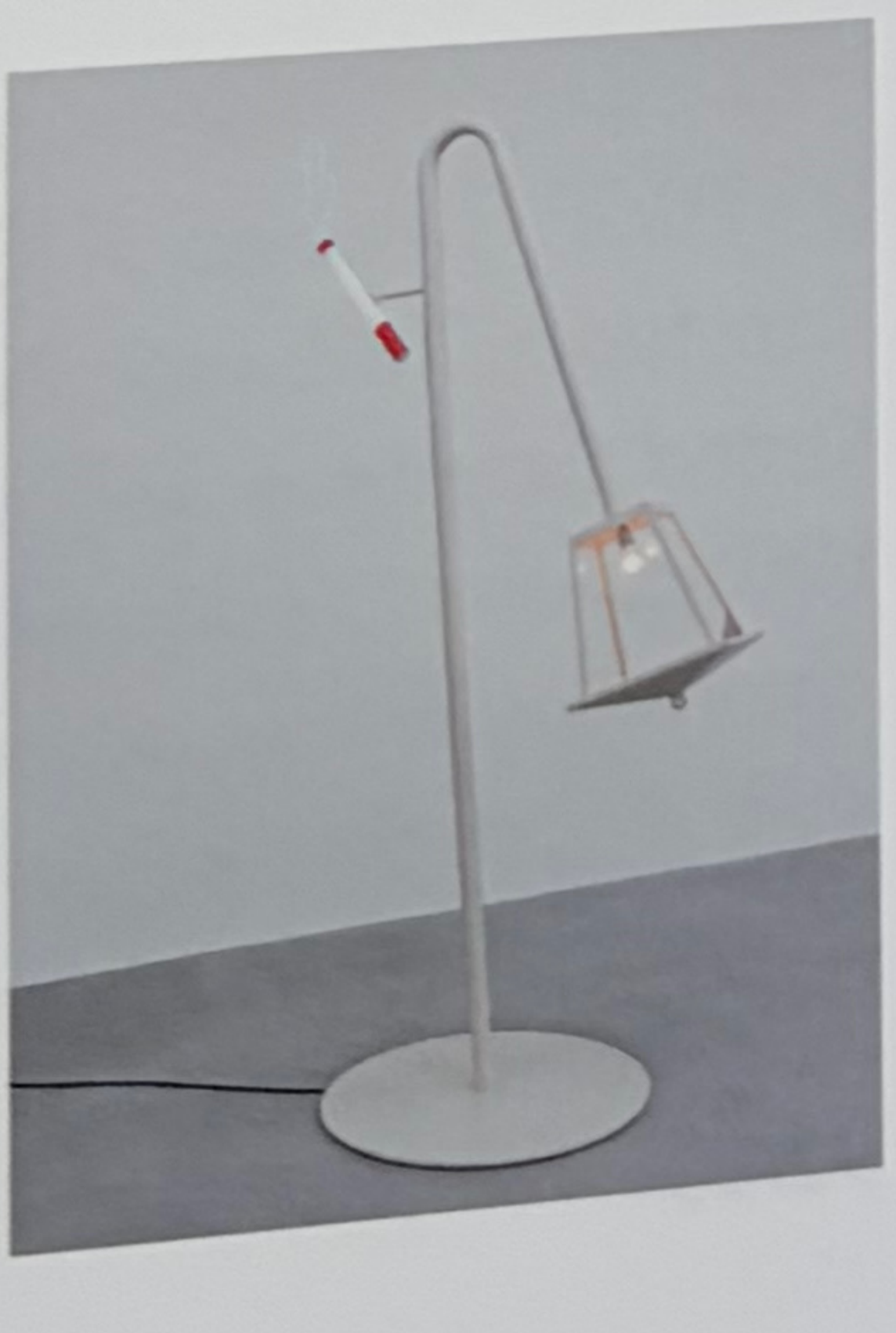
STRAIGHT, NO CHASER, 2007
Wolle, Baumwolle
Wool, cotton
310 × 265 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Petzel, New York
73



THE FAKER, 2022
Samt, Pailletten, Vlies
Velvet, sequins, fleece
205 × 185 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Gaga, Mexico City,
Guadalajara, and Los Angeles
163



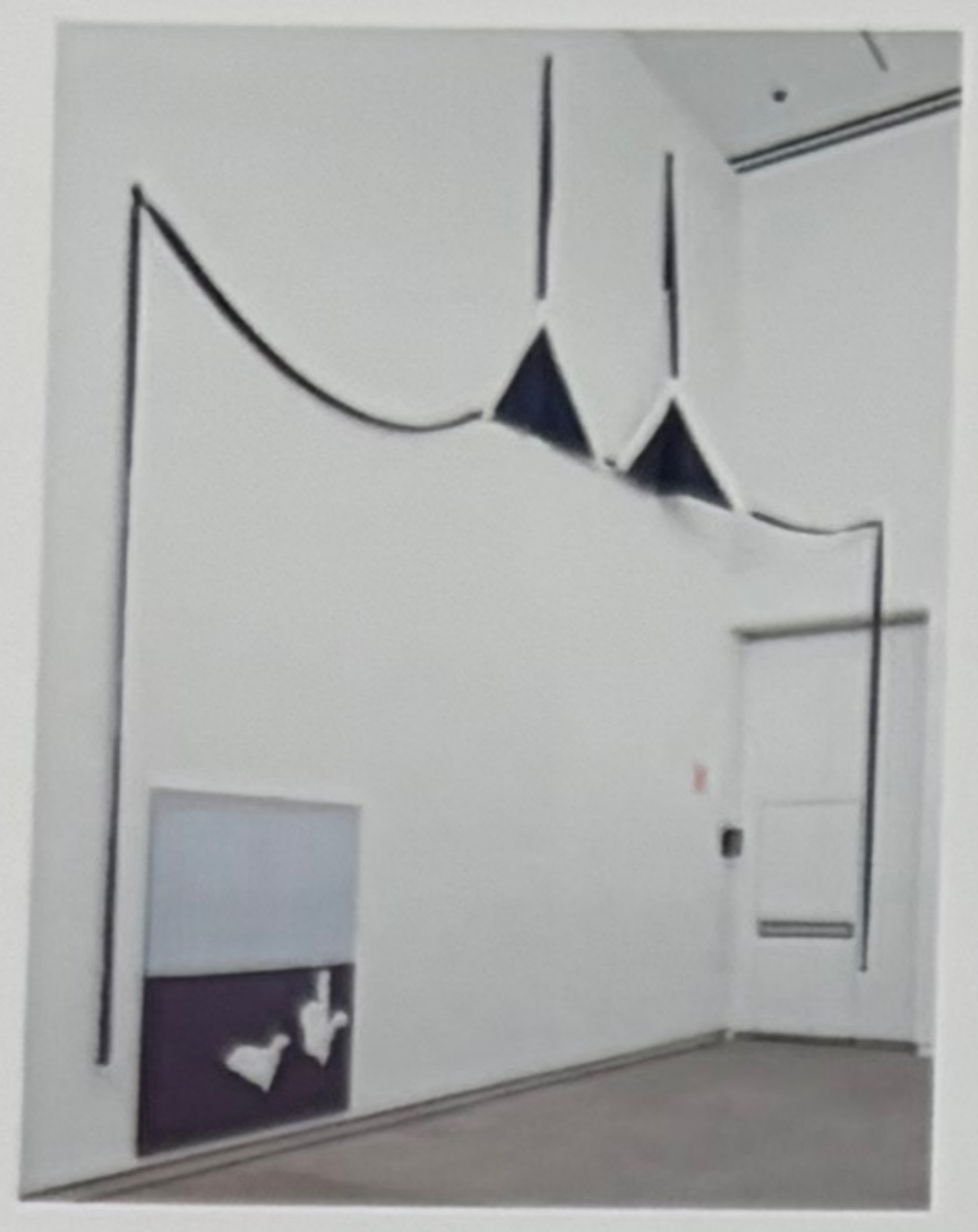
THE ITALIAN (NO NOSE VERSION), 2019
Glasfaserverstärkter Kunststoff, Holz, Kalkstein
Fiberglass-reinforced plastic, wood, travertine
220 × 85 × 100 cm
Stiftung Der bewohnte Garten, Pulheim
122

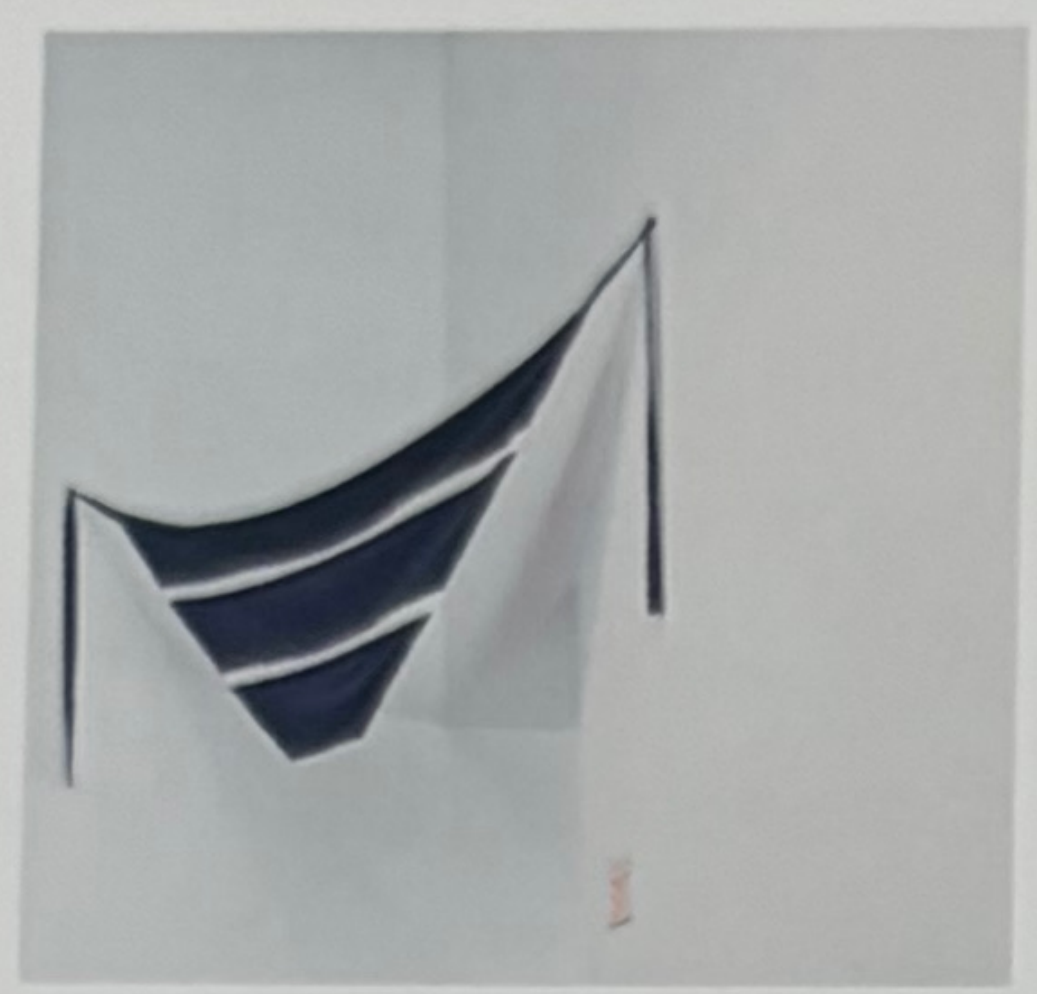


THE MK 2 FORMULA # 303 (OUTDOOR VERSION), 2014
Plexiglas, Stahl, Lack, Neon, Leuchtdiode
Perspex, steel, lacquer, neon, light-emitting diode
287 × 140 × 100 cm
Privatsammlung / Private collection
68

UNTITLED (BIKINI LOOP #2), 1994/2007

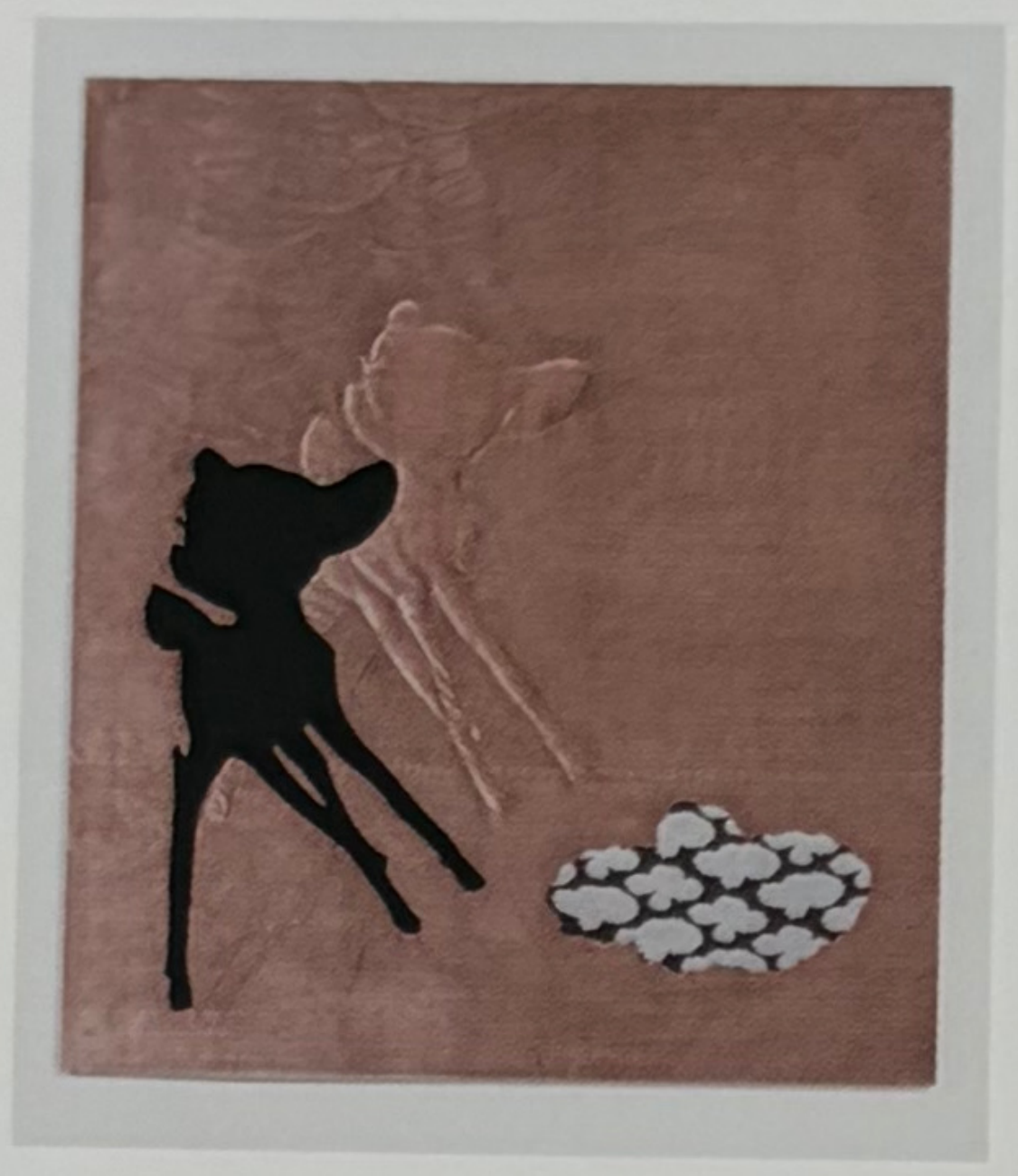
Flaggenstoff
Flag fabric
Zwei Teile / Two parts: 80 × 302 cm + 120 × 300 cm
Privatsammlung / Private collection
Nicht abgebildet / Not illustrated





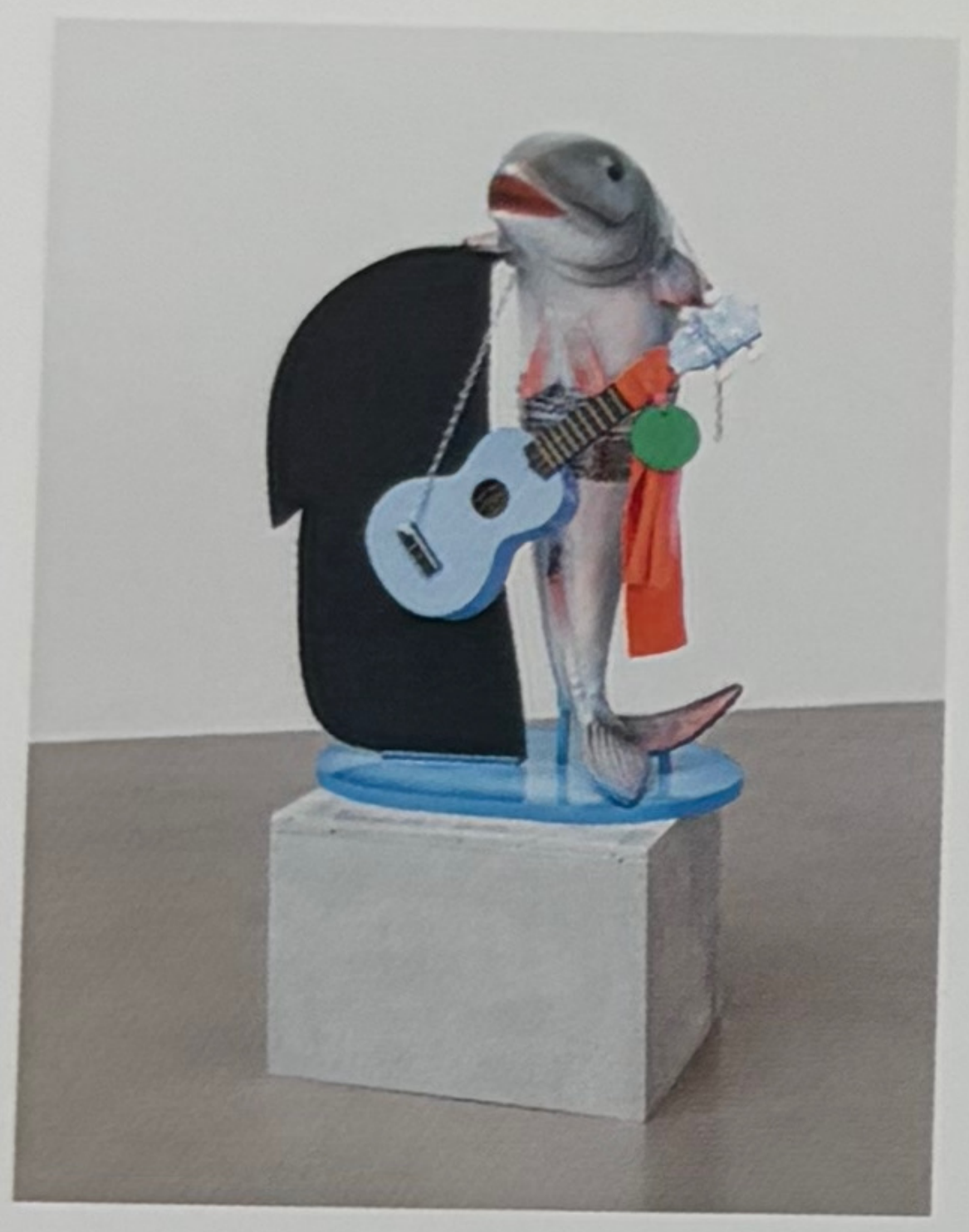
UNTITLED (BIKINI LOOP #3), 2010

Flaggenstoff
Flag fabric
Zwei Teile / Two parts: 80 × 302 cm + 120 × 300 cm
Sammlung Meyring
112, 113



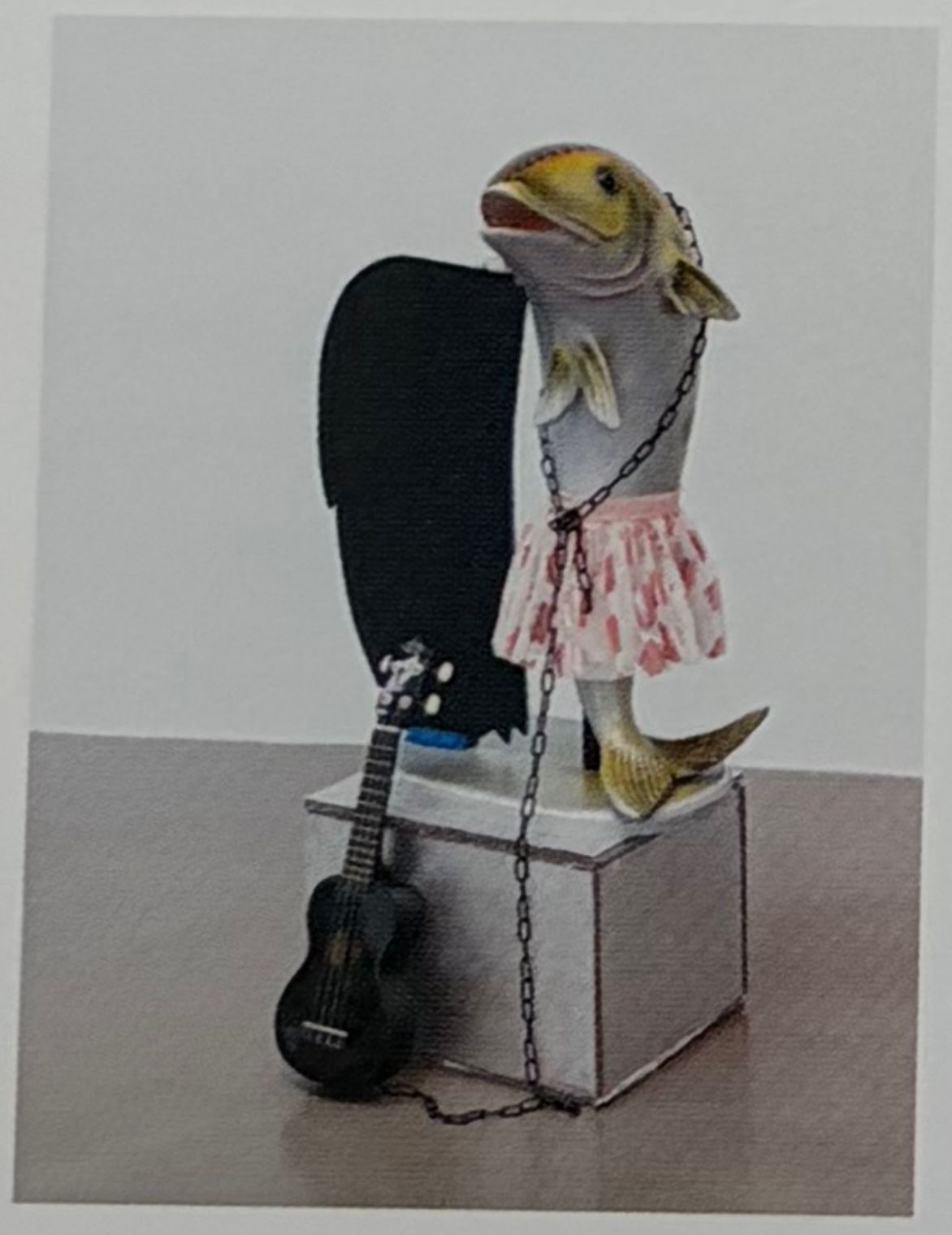
UPSTAIRS DOWNSTAIRS, 2022

Samt, Baumwolle, Vlies
Velvet, cotton, fleece
200 × 175 cm
Privatsammlung / Private collection
89



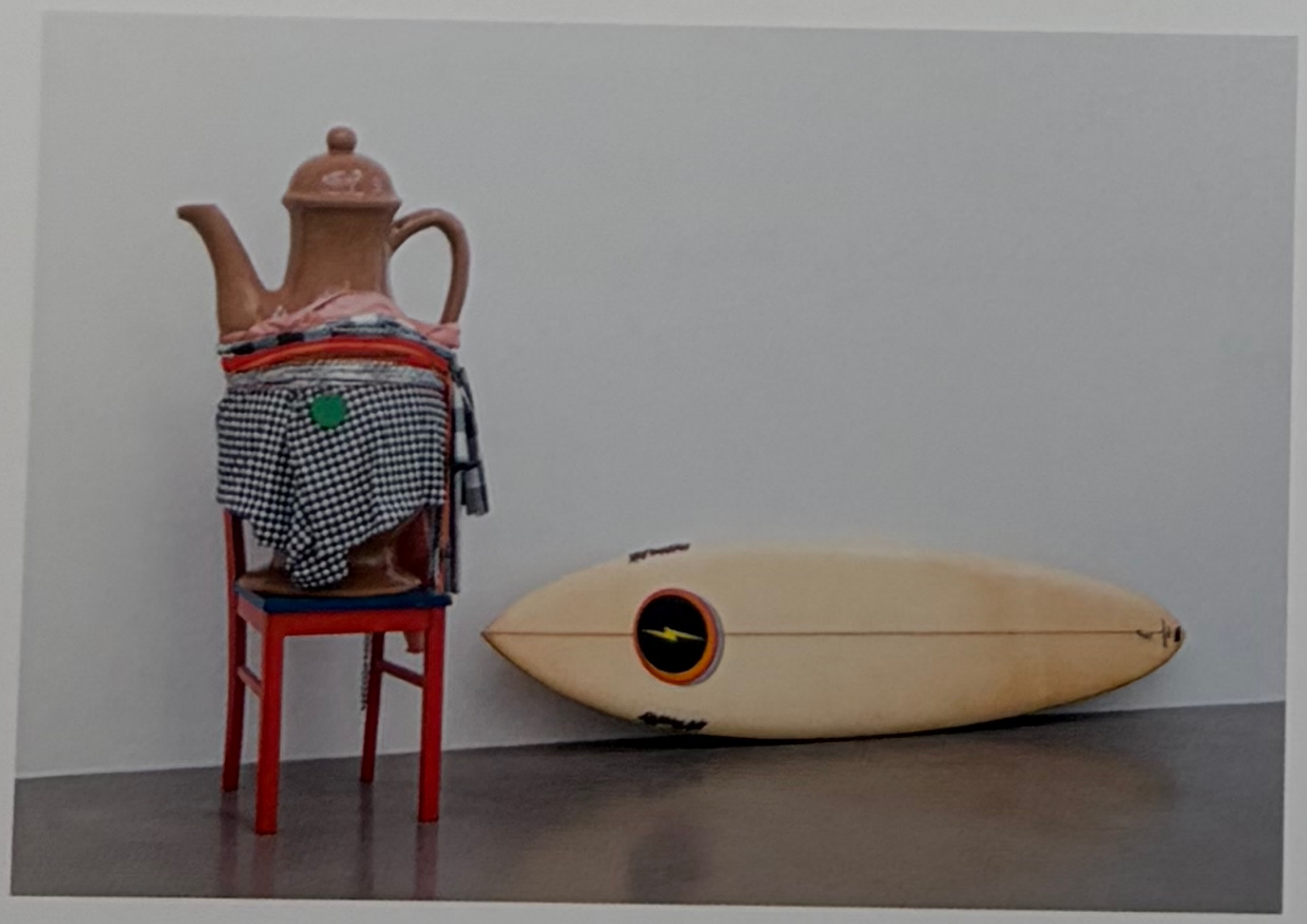
WHAT IF IT BARKS 5 (PETITE VERSION WITH BLUE UKULELE), 2018

Kunststoff, Stoff, Holzsockel, Kette, Gummi, Schal, Ukulele
Plastic, fabric, wood pedestal, chain, rubber, scarf, ukulele
107 × 61 × 46 cm
Magasin III Museum for Contemporary Art,
Stockholm, Sweden
95



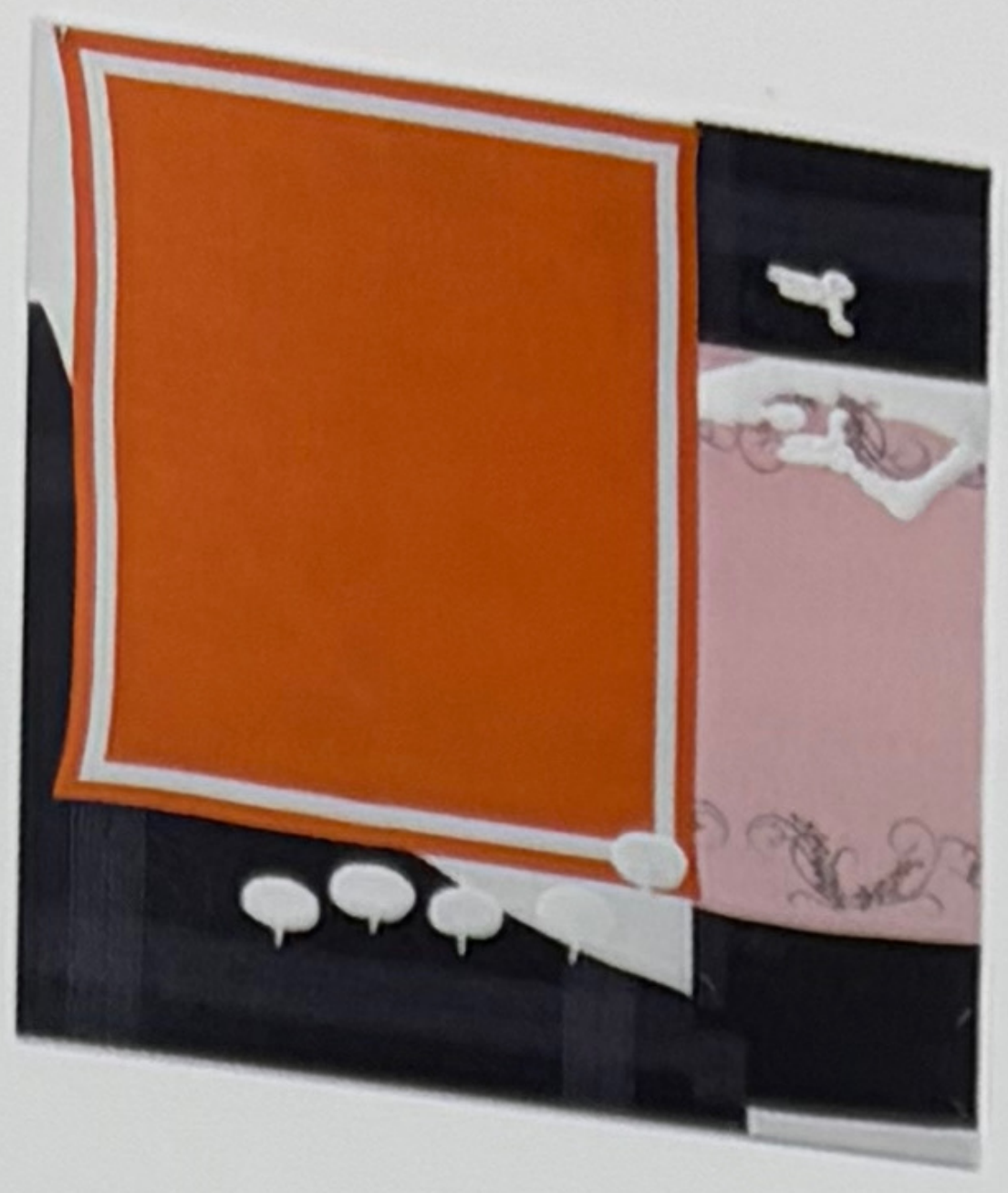
WHAT IF IT BARKS 6 (PETITE VERSION WITH BLACK UKULELE), 2018

Kunststoff, Stoff, Holz, Pappsockel, Kette, Ukulele
Plastic, fabric, wood, cardboard pedestal, chain, ukulele
109 × 59 × 51 cm
Magasin III Museum for Contemporary Art,
Stockholm, Sweden
98



WHAT IF IT BARKS 7 (COFFEE POT VERSION), 2018

Kunststoff, Stoff, Holzstuhl, 1970er Surfbrett, Schals, Ketten, Schnürsenkel, Schnur/Seil
Plastic, fabric, wooden chair, 1970s surfboard, scarfs, chains, shoelaces, twine/rope
148 × 71 × 84 cm
Magasin III Museum for Contemporary Art,
Stockholm, Sweden
92/93



WHY? WHAT, WHAT?, 2009
Wolle, Baumwolle, Vlies
Wool, cotton, fleece
228 × 213 cm
Privatsammlung / Private collection
69

Moritz von Oswald Trio
DIGITAL MYSTIKZ – RESTRUCTURE 2, 2010
LP, Cover von / cover by Cosima von Bonin
Honest Jon's Records
Privatsammlung / Private collection
Nicht abgebildet / Not illustrated

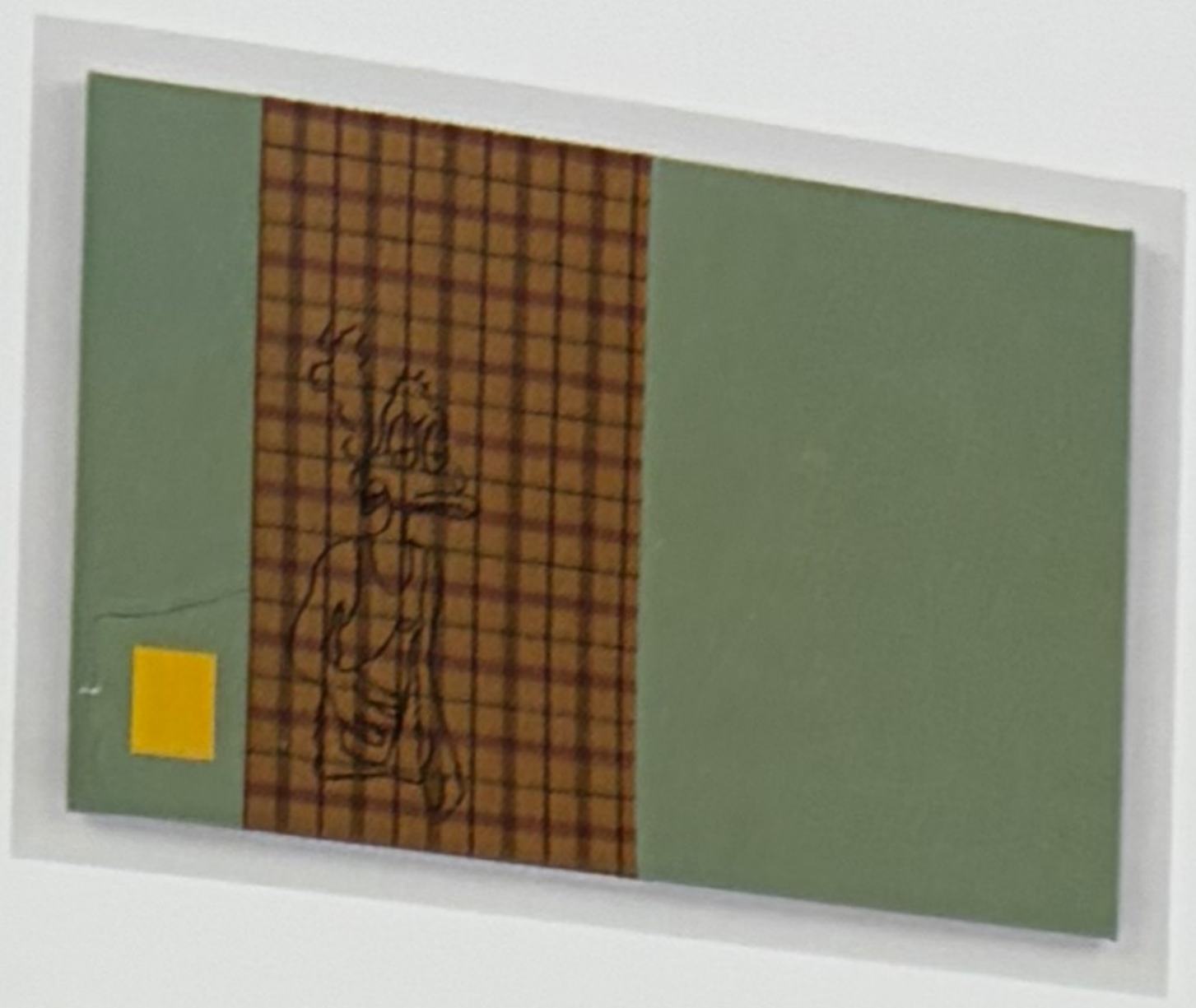
Moritz von Oswald Trio
HORIZONTAL, 2011
LP, Cover von / cover by Cosima von Bonin
Honest Jon's Records
Privatsammlung / Private collection
Nicht abgebildet / Not illustrated

Moritz von Oswald Trio
LIVE IN NEW YORK, 2010
LP, Cover von / cover by Cosima von Bonin
Honest Jon's Records
Privatsammlung / Private collection
67

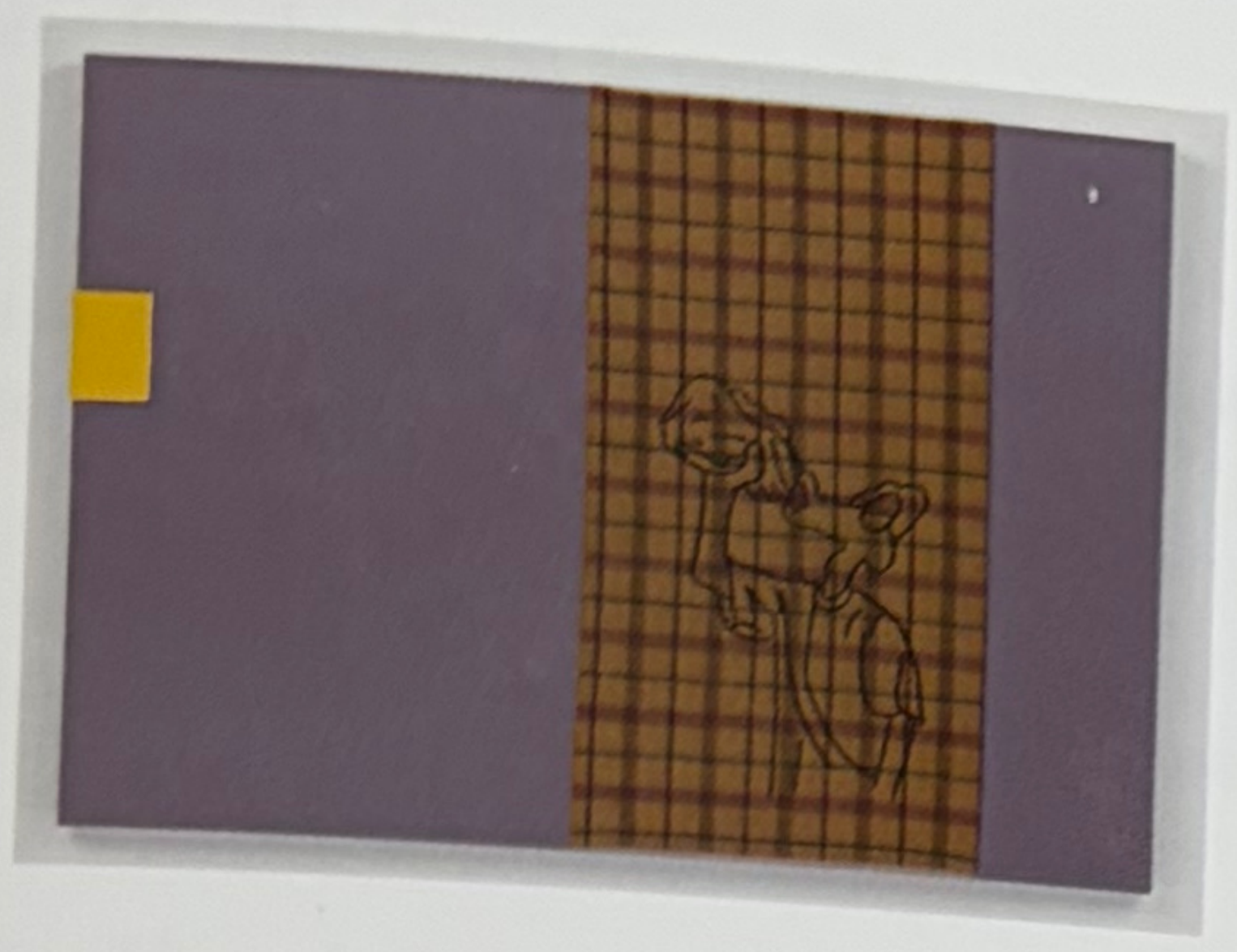
Moritz von Oswald Trio
VERTICAL ASCENT, 2009
LP, Cover von / cover by Cosima von Bonin
Honest Jon's Records
Privatsammlung / Private collection
66

Julion De'Angelo & Viola Klein
WE, 2020
LP
Crevette, A-Musik, Honest Jon's Records
Privatsammlung / Private collection
180

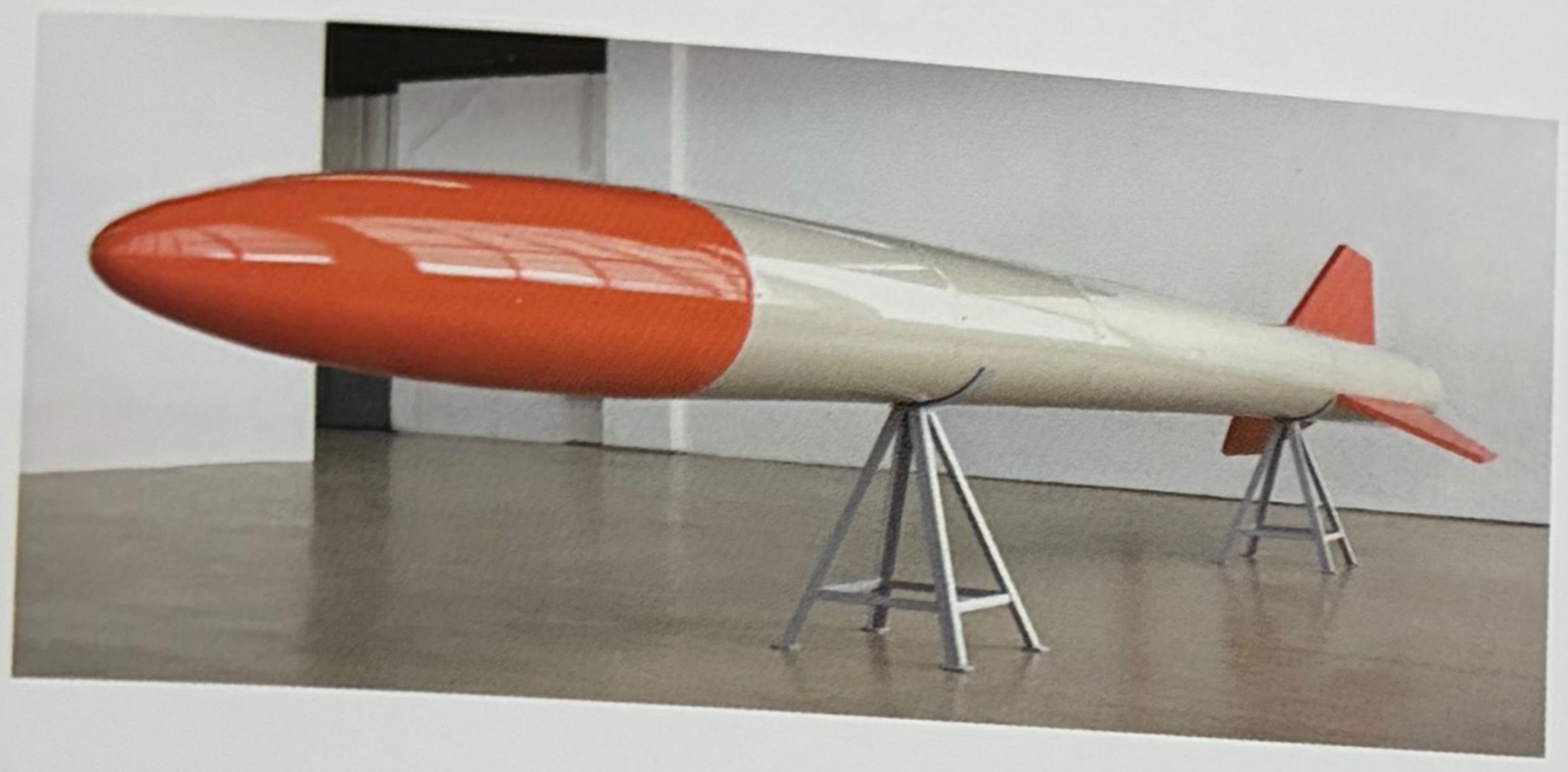
WEITERE WERKE
FURTHER WORKS



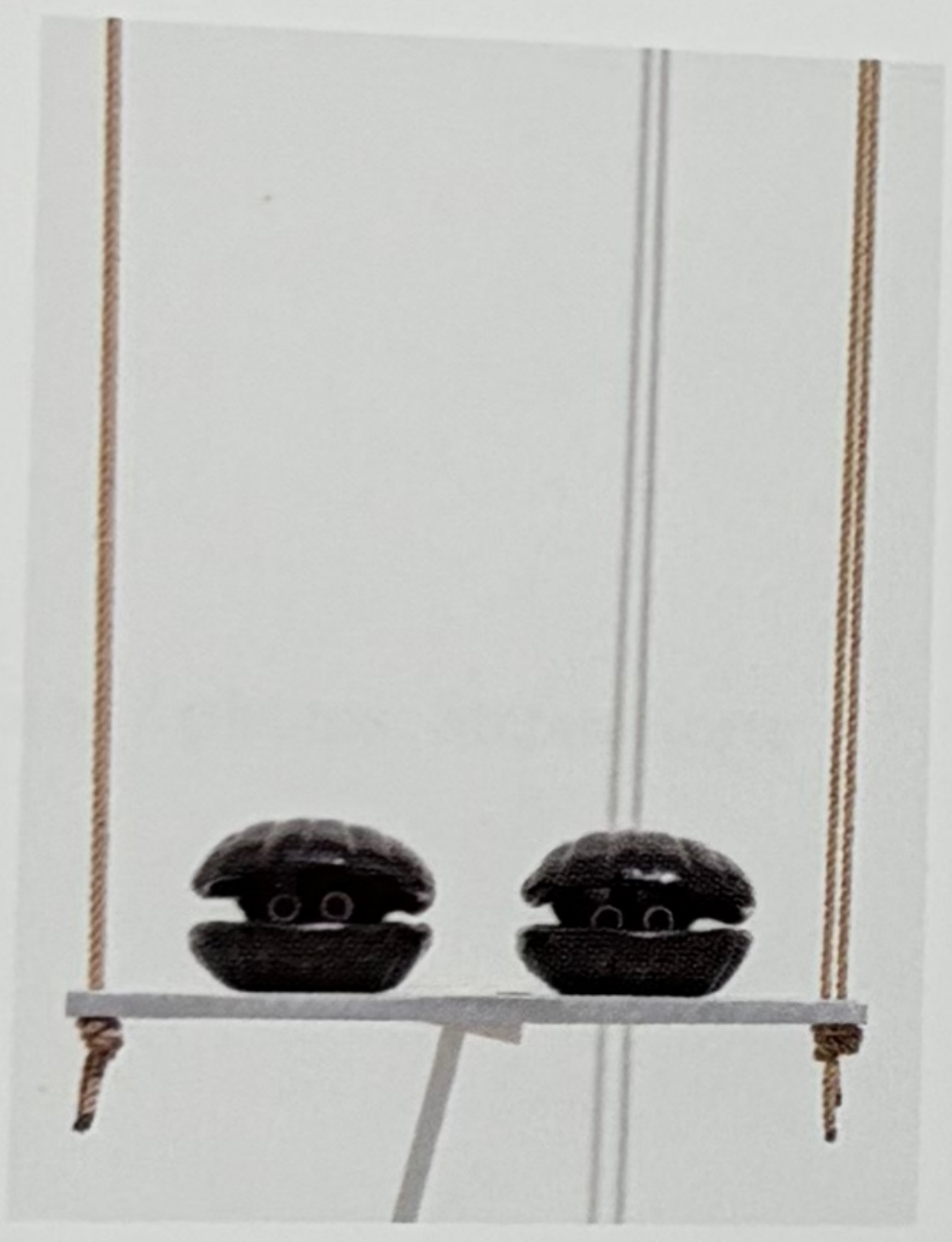
BACKSTAGE TALENT ONLY, 2023
Baumwolle, Seide, Wolle, Leinen und Vlies
Cotton, silk, wool, linen, and fleece
142 × 203 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Petzel, New York
196



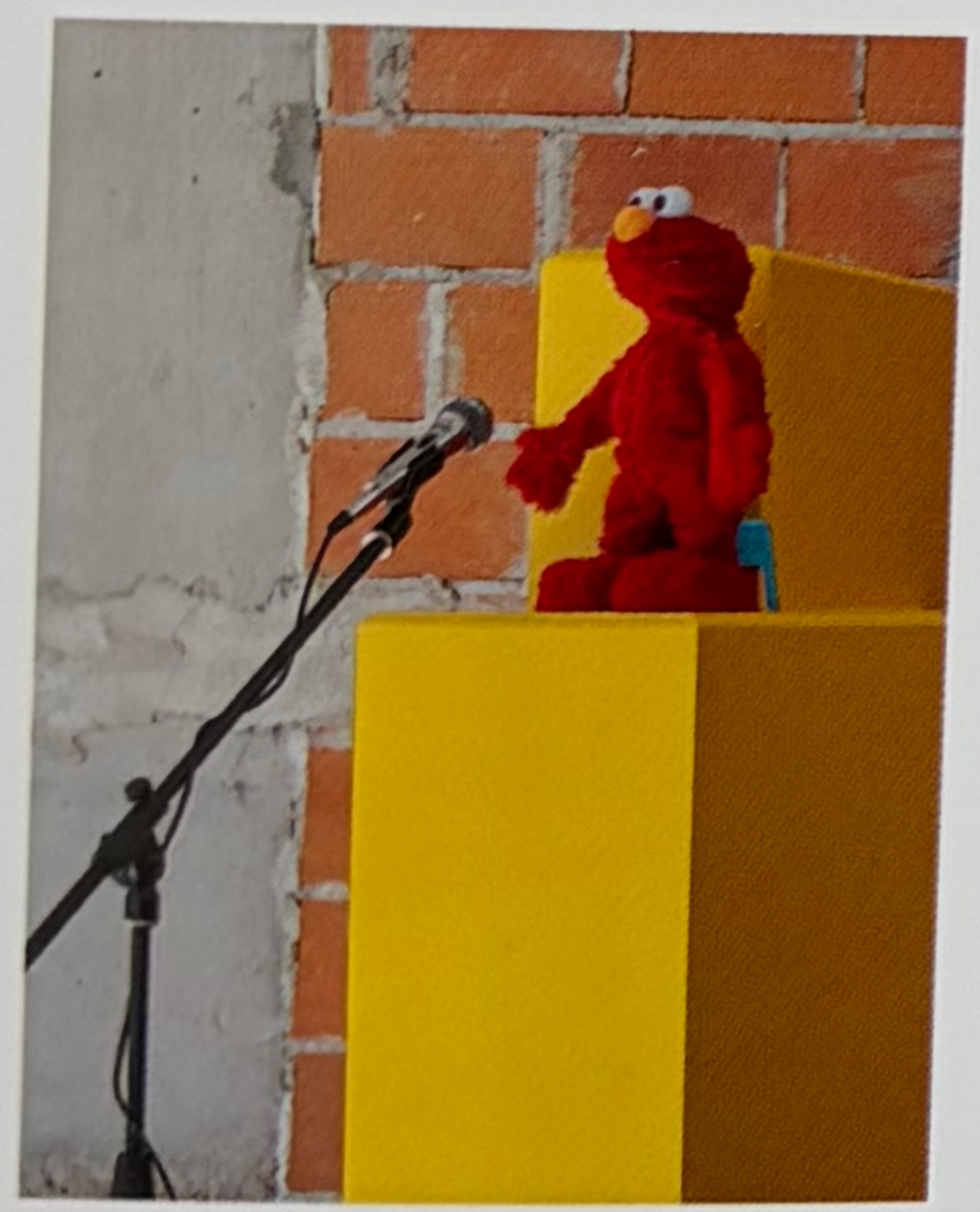
DÄMONENRÄUMDIENST, 2023
Baumwolle, Seide, Wolle, Leinen und Vlies
Cotton, silk, wool, linen, and fleece
146 × 203 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Petzel, New York
199



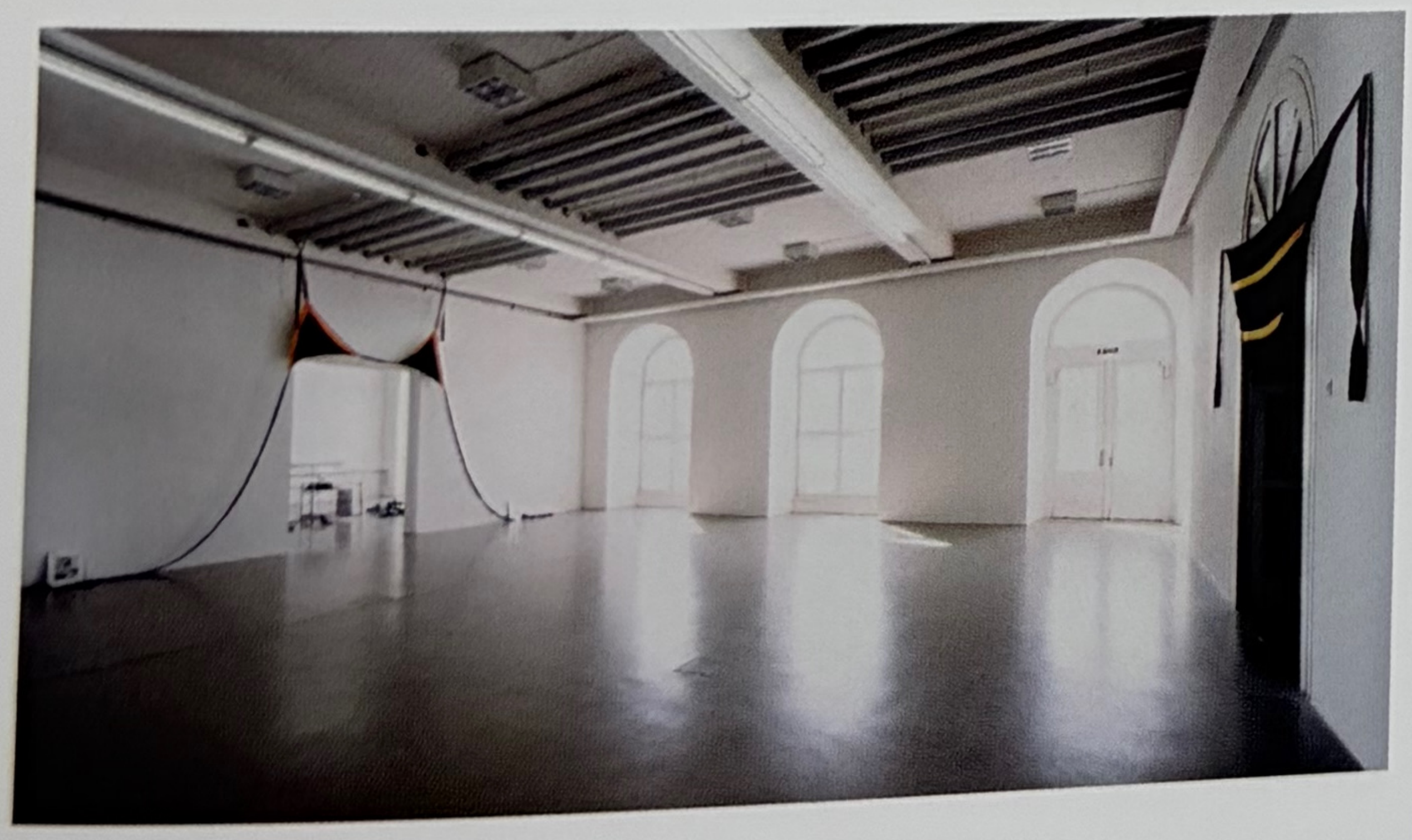
MISS RILEY, 2020
Stahl, Kunststoff, Lack
Steel, plastics, lacquer
160,5 × 730 × 160,5 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Neu, Berlin
138/139



SCALLOPS (GLASS VERSION), 2022
Positiv aus farbigem, transluzentem Epoxidmaterial,
laminierte Holzschaukel mit 20 Meter Seil
Positive in colored translucent epoxy material,
laminated wooden swing with 20 meters of rope
140 × 30 × 40 cm
63



THE BOY, 2023
Lackiertes Holz, animatronischer Elmo, Mikrofon,
Mikrofonständer
Lacquered wood, animatronic Elmo, microphone,
microphone stand
162 × 194 × 56 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Gaga, Mexico City,
Guadalajara, and Los Angeles
147, 148



UNTITLED (BIKINI), 1994
Flaggenstoff
Flag fabric
Zwei Teile / Two parts: 80 × 302 cm + 120 × 300 cm
Privatsammlung / Private collection
106–111